

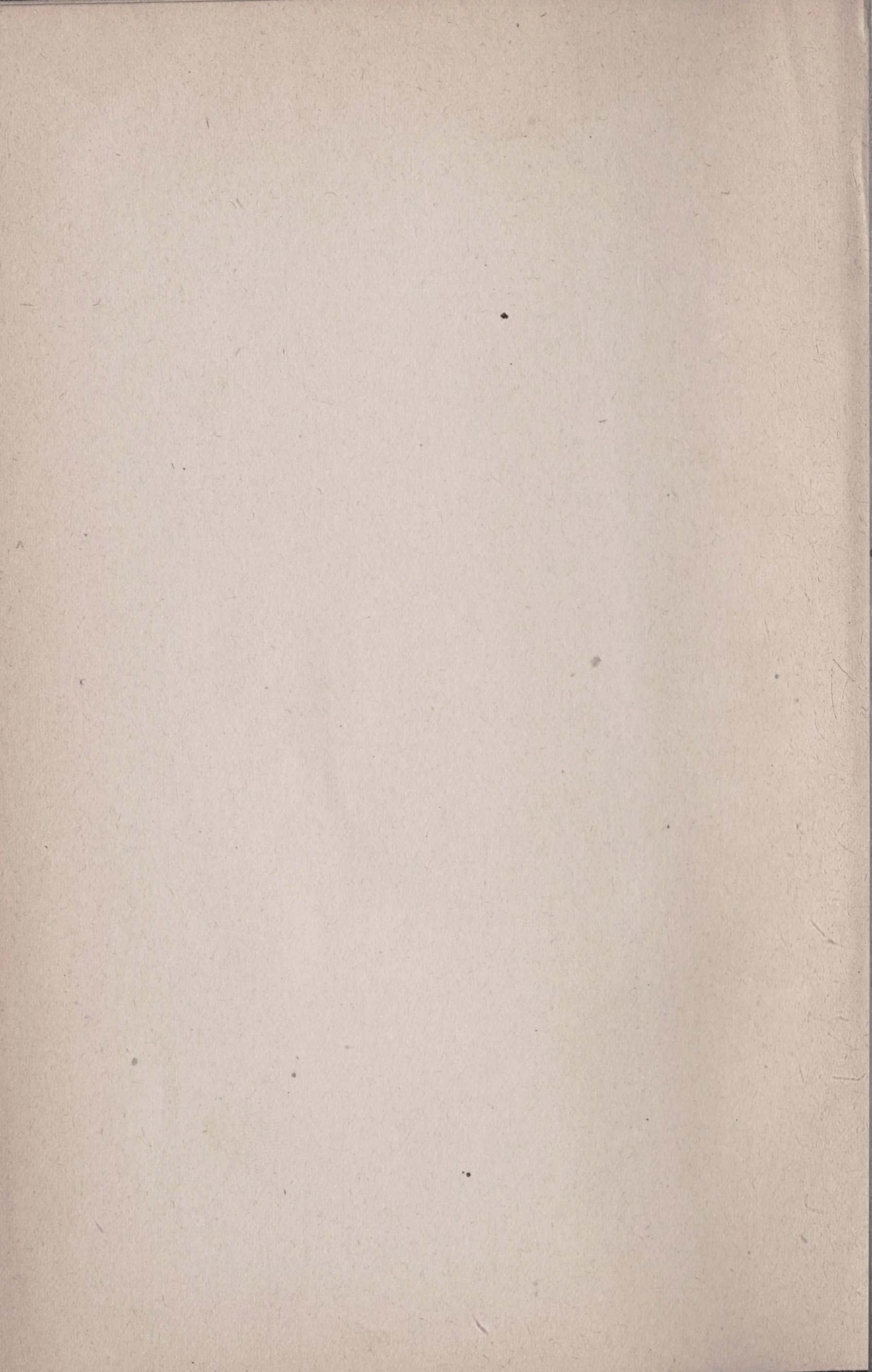
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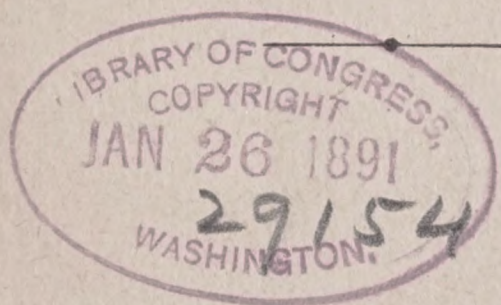
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



IN SEARCH OF A HOME.

BY

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BELLE V. CHISHOLM.



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«IN SEARCH OF A HOME»

CHAPTER I.

OUT IN THE WORLD.

A FIERCE blizzard from the north had swept across the open prairie, causing the frail structure of frame to rock on the four corner-stones that served for its foundation. The windows trembled in their casements and the door creaked upon its rusty hinges, while currents of cold air seemed to enter at every crevice between the poorly joined weather-boards.

Inside, upon a bed in one corner of the scantily furnished apartment, lay a wasted female form. Though emaciated by disease, the face of the woman bore traces of refinement and beauty. She had fallen into a troubled sleep, but the quick, labored breathing and the death-like hue upon her pallid countenance would have at once told an experienced eye that she was dying.

By her bed-side, his hand upon her burning brow, knelt a bright, dark-eyed, handsome boy of—perhaps about fifteen years.

"Can I do any thing for your comfort, mother dear?" he asked tenderly, rising to his feet as the figure on the bed began to show signs of restlessness. "You are shivering," he added, as he commenced to pile more clothes upon her.

Motioning him to stop, she whispered, "There is no use, my child. I will never be warm again."

"It is so very cold, mother, and the fire scarcely reaches you here. I must put on more wood," he said, turning toward the stove.

She put out her hand to detain him, saying, with an effort, "Neither clothes nor fire will warm me now, for the chill of death is upon me."

"O, mother, you are not dying, surely!" he cried in agony. "I will bring the doctor, and he can give you relief."

"No, my poor child, a physician can be of no avail to me now. I am almost home."

"I will run across the meadow for Mrs. Morgan," the boy said, snatching his hat from the table at the foot of the bed.

"I would rather be by ourselves, Donald. I have something to say to you—something that none save your ears must hear. I should have told you before. I am afraid that I have put it off too long, for the icy finger of death is upon me now. You must be brave, for the responsibilities of life will rest heavily upon your young shoulders when I am gone. Do you think that you are able to meet the trials of the next hour?"

"You can trust me with any message you have to deliver, mother," said Donald, straightening himself up, while a new light shone in his tearful eyes.

"Give me a teaspoonful of that medicine," she said, pointing to a vial on the table. "I feel my strength going, and I must live a little longer."

After swallowing the stimulant she closed her eyes and folded her hands reverently over her breast for a few moments. Donald knew from her attitude that she was engaged in prayer—prayer for a few minutes more of time to perform some work which she considered a duty. An unutterable longing came into her dark eyes, as she bent them lovingly upon the noble boy at her side. Taking his warm hands into her own, that were already stiffening for the grave, she said in a low, but very distinct, voice:

"First of all, you must promise me never to drink one drop of intoxicating liquor. Rum ruined your poor father and broke your mother's heart. Can you give me this promise?"

"Mother, before God, and with your dying eyes resting upon me, I vow never to touch, taste or handle a drop of any kind of intoxicants."

"Amen! so help you God!" came in solemn tones from the dying woman's cold lips. "You were so young when that terrible accident happened your father that I did not tell you its cause. I waded through snow-drifts in search of him many hours before I came upon him nearly frozen to death. After many long months of suffering he came slowly back to life, but he never enjoyed a day's perfect health afterwards. You know how happy and contented he was during his later years, but you never understood through what fiery trials he had passed during the refining process. I believe he was all the better for having been led through the deep waters, but it is to save you from unseen and unknown dan-

gers that I now warn you to shun the cup that spoiled his life and sent him through the world a prematurely broken-down man.

“Poor man! The temptations that had been spread before him in his childhood and youth proved too much for his weakness, and you, my son, have even more with which to contend than had your father, because you have an inherited taste for spirits—the veriest curse a man could bequeath to his children.

“When I am dead, write to your Uncle James. Perhaps out of his abundance he may provide for the child of his only sister. When your father died Aunt Penelope wrote to me offering you a home, but I could not part with you.” Here a violent fit of coughing interrupted her, and when she rallied somewhat she made an effort to finish the sentence, but no sound came from the pale lips that were trying to frame the words struggling for utterance. For some minutes she lay quiet, her eyes half closed, and then, as if gathering her strength for a desperate effort, she gasped:—“Aunt Penelope wanted Donald to live with her, but—” Again the troublesome cough returned, and Donald, thinking that she was fretting about what should become of him, whispered hoarsely:

“Do not worry, mother; I will miss you sadly, but I will try to be brave and live a life that will not dishonor your memory. You have been the very best mother a boy ever had.”

The mother smiled faintly, but did not seem satisfied, and tried hard to make herself understood, but the words died on her lips, and after a little she ceased struggling and closed her eyes again. Soon there was a slight trembling of the muscles of the

face, a shiver ran through the delicate frame, and then the soul of Mrs. Bergh was with God, and poor Donald was indeed an orphan. At last the broken-hearted boy drew the sheet over the still face, and went out in the storm in search of help.

The simple arrangements were made for the funeral, and on the morrow the friendless boy stood alone by the open grave and listened to the clods as they fell upon the coffin of his precious mother.

Mrs. Bergh's gentle ways had endeared her to the whole neighborhood, and right generously did the humble homes open to receive her orphan boy.

The dead woman's small possessions were sold to cover the funeral expenses, and while he was waiting for an answer from Uncle James, Donald assisted Tim Smithers, the jolly cobbler, in keeping the school-boys' boots and shoes soled and patched according to the most improved fashion.

The long, cold winter passed away without bringing the orphan boy the letter he longed to receive. Sometimes he was tempted to write again, but he was proud as well as poor, and he could not humble himself to beg favors of one who possibly took this very method of ignoring his existence.

One chilly day in early April, after he had given up ever hearing from his relatives, a letter from the East, addressed to Donald Bergh, created quite a commotion in the little hamlet. It was not from Uncle James, however, Donald found when he tore it open, but the signature of Aunt Penelope reminded him painfully of the sad scene that had taken place on the evening his mother had died. This is what he read when at last he could see through his tears:

Egbert, Va., April 4.

MY DEAR NEPHEW .

Your Uncle James in trying to shirk responsibility has had the audacity to send your letter concerning your mother's death to me, with the instruction that it is my duty to look after you. Once, for your father's sake, I offered to take you, but your mother would not listen to my proposal, and I sent her word then that I would wash my hands of all responsibility in the case forever. But as your Uncle James acts so unnaturally I suppose some of your connections will be obliged to keep you out of the almshouse. As he stated in his letter, I am the only relative on your father's side, and except himself your mother's kin-folks are all as poor as church mice. I have sent money to procure you a ticket to Dr. Norse, and will expect you in due course of time. But mind—there is one thing which I wish to impress particularly on your mind—I am not going to keep you up in idleness. Remember, you will have no easy place to fill, for I give you fair warning that I have no intention of making a fine gentleman of you.

Your Grand-aunt,

PENELOPE GARTH.

Donald's proud heart rebelled against accepting this ungracious invitation, but as it was all that offered at the time, he determined to make it a stepping-place to something better.



CHAPTER II.

A TRIP AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

THE trip was tedious, owing to the many washouts caused by the heavy spring rains, but Donald was accustomed to hardships and bore the fatigue uncomplainingly.

When the train stopped at Egbert it was late in the afternoon, and the constant patter of rain made the little dingy station look even more dreary than usual. He was the only passenger who left the train. The station-master had hustled out to attend to the mail, and two or three loungers, who occupied a greasy bench by the door, looked lazily up at the newcomer. Donald inquired of them the distance and direction to his aunt's.

"Bless me, lad! you've got off a station too soon. This is only Egbert Crossing, and it is a good mile from the town. You see if you had kept your seat it would have saved you a long walk in the rain and slush," said the good-natured agent. "If the old lady knew of the mistake she might send her man down with a beast to carry you up."

"But she don't know, and it is not probable that she would put herself to that trouble if she did," said Donald. "I must foot the balance of the road, and the sooner I get at it, the sooner it will be over."

"How lucky you are, boy! Here comes Park

M'Cabe with his wagon, and you can ride home with him just as well as not."

The man left his work, and hurrying to the rear end of the platform hollowed to his neighbor, "Can you take a youngster up to Pine Knob, Mr. M'Cabe?"

"That I can, and mighty glad o' the chance. Bring him along, Billy."

"Step lively now; for M'Cabe is a good enough sort of a fellow if you keep on the right side of him, but he is as tart as a crab-apple if you don't come up to time," said the man, addressing Donald.

"And so you are Norman Bergh's kid, eh? You have your father's eyes sure and sartin," began M'Cabe, as soon as he was seated. "Don't I remember young Mr. Bergh? He was as gay as a lark, and the old woman sot great store by him; but when he ran away and married pretty Mary Lee, she shut the door in his face, and so fur as I know on't she never set eyes on him agin. She had nothing in the world against the dark-eyed music-teacher 'cept she was poor and worked for her livin'. You 'low to live with the old woman?"

"For a short time at least," replied Donald.

"Well, I hope the old vixen will try to make you comfortable, but I fear she won't. Fact is, she would quarrel with herself if she had nobody else to scold. But scoldin' never breaks no bones, and mayhaps, for the young master's sake, she'll be kinder tender with you. People did say she felt orful when Norman died, but no more did she let on, because she had said hard things about him. You see, he was only her nephew, but she had no children of her own and took him when her sister-in-law died, and allus 'lowed to make him her heir until he left her for sweet Polly Lee."

Donald felt the indignant blood dyeing his cheeks when the man referred to his sainted mother, and even before he reached his aunt's stately residence he felt impelled to fly away, anywhere, except to the house of the woman who had done his precious mother such gross injustice. It was growing dusk when M'Cabe's heavy wagon lumbered in sight of the cold, inhospitable-looking brick dwelling that he pointed out as Aunt Penelope Garth's.

After Donald had his hand on the old-fashioned brass knocker his courage forsook him, and had it not been that M'Cabe was too far gone, he would have preferred begging a night's lodging from him to venturing within the dreary abode.

The smiling countenance of old Uncle Abram, who opened the door, was a welcome in itself, but the tall, angular figure that arose when the old servant announced, "Here's Massa Norman's boy, missis," was any thing but reassuring.

"Well!" she ejaculated sharply.

"Rode all the way from de station in Park M'Cabe's great, heavy wagon," continued the old man.

"The distance is not so great but that he might have walked," snapped the woman, impatiently.

"I made a mistake and got off at the Crossing, a mile below," explained Donald meekly.

"Humph! You are a bright boy indeed. You would have been served right if you had been obliged to foot every step of the way. What kept you two whole extra days on the road anyhow?"

"The heavy rains had washed away several bridges and we were compelled to wait until they could be repaired," Donald answered quietly.

"Your name is Donald, I guess," said Aunt Pen,

adjusting her gold-bowed spectacles so as to take a closer look at the boy. "Such a heathenish name! Why were you not called Tom, Joe, or Bill instead?"

After scrutinizing him closely for a short time, the old woman shook her head, saying:

"You have your father's eyes and hair, but the plebeian face of the Lees is your legacy as well. But why don't you sit down? You are surely tired after your long journey."

Though she did not change her tone, her words were kinder, and Donald slipped into the chair she had pointed out to him, glad that the dreaded meeting was over.

"Bring him a glass of wine, Abram, and tell Chrissy to hurry up the supper, for I know from the boy's looks that he is half-famished."

The old lady gave her guest no chance to countermand her order, but a few minutes later when Abram appeared with a tiny glass filled with sparkling wine, he had the courage to say, "No, I thank you. I never drink wine."

"Hut! down with it, lad. It will do you a world of good," exclaimed Aunt Pen, testily.

"I do not care for it, Aunt. I hope you will excuse me," the boy returned, as a vivid picture of his last interview with his mother passed before his mind's eye.

"That is some of your mother's new-fangled ideas. What need I care if you choose to make a simpleton of yourself. Drink it or not as you like, but if you chance to fall sick because you refused my advice don't expect me to take care of you."

"This is your Cousin Norman's boy, Dick," she explained to a handsome, well-dressed youth who came in in a careless way, as if very much at home.

"Ah, indeed! I am glad to meet him, I am sure," Dick answered cheerily, as he lazily crossed the room and held out his soft, white hand.

"I hope you will be good friends," continued Aunt Pen, "though I'll take this opportunity to warn Donald that he is not to fall into your indolent habits," addressing Dick.

"One gentleman in a family is enough, you think," laughed Dick, good-naturedly.

"Just one too much, and I will not allow your cousin to follow your example," answered the old lady. Then turning to Donald she said, "You will find, sir, that I have no intention of pampering you up. If you have come expecting a soft, easy place you will find yourself mistaken."

"I expect nothing but what I honestly earn," Donald replied, drawing himself up proudly.

"You've got the Bergh pride, if you have not their money," Aunt Pen returned, sharply, although in her heart she really admired the little flush of indignation that showed his kinship.

At the tea-table a little dark-eyed, gypsy-looking girl was introduced to him as Dick's sister. He afterwards found out that she had another name—Christine—and that she possessed an individuality altogether her own.

Dick and Christine Jewell were the orphan children of Aunt Pen's only sister, and since their mother's death had been inmates of her house. For the girl she had never shown the weakness of affection, but if there was a soft place in her heart it belonged wholly to graceless, easy-going Dick, who, with all his faults, generally managed to keep on the good side of his irate kinswoman. Notwithstanding her natural

cruelty, no human being had ever come so near the old woman's heart as this nephew. Indeed, she loved him as well as her selfish nature would allow her to care for any one.



CHAPTER III.

THE TEMPTER AND THE TEMPTED.

AUNT PEN was an old-time aristocrat, and in spite of modern invasions on the temperance question insisted in offering her guests the very best wine her cellar afforded. More than any thing else this practice annoyed Donald. Though the tiny glass that day after day stood by his plate was always carried away untouched, the temptation to taste its contents had to be overcome every time he took his seat at the table. He noticed that both Dick and Christine sipped the sparkling wine, and seemed to enjoy it, and more than once, after Dick had helped himself to a second glass, he fancied that the poor fellow had taken more than he was able to bear. Once he ventured to expostulate with him, but his Aunt silenced him with:

"Don't be a fool, Donald. If you see proper you are at liberty to let it alone, but Dick shall have all the wine he wants. He is not strong, and needs a tonic to build him up."

"He looks delicate, indeed," sneered Christine, after giving her brother a keen glance.

"Attend to your own affairs, miss," and then turning to Dick, the old woman added, "Just help yourself to another glass if you're amind to drink it."

The reckless fellow did not wait for another invita-

tion. Raising the third glass to his lips, he said in an unnatural voice, "Here's to your health, Aunt Pen."

"What if he should learn to like it too well, Aunt?" asked Donald, frightened at the strange look in his Cousin's eye.

"Don't insult me in my own house, boy. Dick a drunkard, indeed, and he a Bergh—your own father's Cousin! How dare you insinuate such a thing?"

"I would not trust myself, Aunt," Donald replied, huskily.

"You would not, eh? That's the Lee blood in your veins asserting its weakness. No Bergh would be guilty of speaking such treacherous words. I am ashamed of you, Donald, poor, wretched, whining coward!"

The boy's face flushed angrily at the unkind thrust, and he was on the point of asking her whose blood flowed in his father's veins, but respect for the dead sealed his lips. He wondered if she were really ignorant concerning his poor father's habits of life, and then for the hundredth time he made an effort to fathom the secret in regard to Aunt Pen which his mother had carried to the grave with her. Did she really wish him to seek a home with this hard-hearted woman, or was she trying to warn him against coming under her influence? Had she a knowledge of the temptations to which he would be exposed in this old ancestral home? She had expressed grave fears concerning the danger into which his inherited taste might lead him. Had his father labored under the same curse that overshadowed him, or had his misfortune been forced upon him, as a similar fate was now being wrought out by poor, handsome, easy-going

Dick? He was not satisfied with Aunt Pen's views on the temperance question, but as he had no power to change her ideas of the fitness of things, he determined to dismiss the subject from his mind, and try to do his best while in her service. Perhaps, after all, there was no danger; at least not for Dick.

The next day at dinner Christine sent her glass away as it had come—a circumstance that attracted Aunt Pen's notice at once.

"Are you sick, Chrissy, that you do not drink your wine?" she asked, a little anxiously.

"No, ma'am, I am well enough, but I don't intend to drink any more of that stuff, and I don't want you to offer it to me again," replied the girl, sullenly.

"That comes of listening to bits of boys who think they are wiser than their elders. Let me hear no more of such nonsense," retorted Aunt Pen, sharply.

"It is all the same to me, Aunt, but I mean just what I say. I am done with wine forever."

"Christine Jewell! have you really taken leave of your senses altogether?"

"No, Aunt, I have just found them, and I mean to follow my own judgment hereafter—I mean about tippling. You see I didn't know how fond I was of wine until Cousin Donald opened my eyes."

"Made a simpleton of you, more truthfully," returned the old lady, wrathfully. "I wonder who will suffer from your mature decision? I am sure it will not be the wine-cellar."

"Never mind, Aunt! that makes another off the champagne list. I will make up for all deficiencies in that line. You see I am a boy after your own heart," drawled Dick, good-naturedly.

"Yes, yes! after my own heart when there's eating

or drinking going on. You're better at emptying the decanter than is good for either you or the wine," returned Aunt Pen, with a playful wave of her hand.

Christine frowned. Yesterday's little episode had opened her eyes to Dick's danger, and it annoyed her to hear Aunt Pen joke on such a serious subject.

"Don't look so glum, sister mine," said Dick, just in a humor for teasing. "You and Donald have both turned reprobate, and the dignity of the house all rests upon my shoulders. If it were not for Aunt Pen and myself, I do not know what would become of the ancient glory of the Berghs."

"Ancient fiddlesticks," snapped Christine. "The glory of the Berghs is a thing of the past. The present morals of the tribe need looking after much worse. If you would turn a little of your surplus energy in that direction it might be well expended."

"That's so, Gypsy, but you see I am not one of the canting kind, and will be obliged to delegate that interesting field to some better hypocrite than I ever expect to be. Here's Donald, for instance. He's cut out for a parson, and may as well begin work to-day as in a year or two from the present date. What do you have to say on the subject, Dominie?" slapping Donald familiarly on the back.

"I am more concerned about that piece of fence I am building than any thing else, just now," replied Donald.

"How lofty you soar!" exclaimed Dick, in a mocking tone. "The smell of the mechanic's dust is still upon your clothes."

Donald winced, but made no reply. More than once had Dick sneered at the humble life from which

he had been taken, and Donald was proud as well as poor. He was anxious to obtain an education—all his life he had looked forward to the time when he should be able to enter college, but just at present his anticipations of speedy advancement seemed any thing but flattering. The spring and summer passed away without bringing any change in his monotonous life. He was becoming thoroughly discouraged when something did really happen—something that surprised everybody as well as himself. The surprise came to him on a bright November day, just one week before Thanksgiving, and this is how it came. He was carrying the last basket of rosy-cheeked apples into the cellar when the lank, ungainly form of Aunt Pen appeared at the top of the stairs, and a voice that sounded strangely kind said:—"Well! that job is over at last, and I must say that I never had my apples put away in a more satisfactory way in my life."

It was the first time that she had ever spoken to the boy in that tone, and the appreciative words caused a glow of pleasure to tinge his cheeks, and the tears of gladness in his eyes made him consume more time than was necessary to arrange the lids of the bins so as to admit the proper amount of air. He made no reply, for he did not know but that an answer might provoke a sharp retort, for no one knew what to expect from Aunt Pen's quick, unruly tongue; besides he was afraid that the quiver in his voice might betray his feelings, and if there was any thing that this old Aunt hated worse than another, it was the weakness of having feelings.

As he turned to leave the cellar she began again: "Now spry around briskly and get the work out of the way, so you can start to the Academy when the

winter term begins. And when you are in school improve your time well, for a great boy of your age cannot be spared from the farm many months in the year. Let me see—you are almost sixteen, are you not?"

"Sixteen next August," Donald answered respectfully.

"Dick has been in the Academy for several years, but he does not take to learning like some boys I know. I cannot afford to keep you both in school for any length of time, and you must try to do better work than he can show. Don't forget what I have been saying, and try to keep up with the best of the boys in your studies."

"If I do not help myself I deserve to fail," Donald replied, quickly.

"It is well that you have sense to see that," was Aunt Pen's answer. "Of course, I am not bound to educate you, and I am of the opinion that a good trade would be the most suitable thing for a boy in your circumstances."

Donald winced, but he made no reply, and as soon as his Aunt returned to her work, he hurried away to assist Abram in gathering the pumpkins into the barn. The memory of his Aunt's kind words enabled him to do double work that afternoon, and for several days following he bore her unreasonableness with more patience than he had ever exhibited before.

CHAPTER IV.

SCHOOL LIFE.

A FEW weeks later he was introduced by Dick to the Academy boys, and much to that young gentleman's surprise was assigned to classes of a much higher grade than the ones to which he belonged.

The school was in a flourishing condition, and many boys and young men from quite a distance were inmates of the boarding hall. Among them were sons of ministers, lawyers, doctors and statesmen, and some of the students from the more humble walks of life insisted that the Principal, Dr. Armitage, had two sets of rules for the two grades of students. Of course, they knew that this was not literally true, but I am afraid the good old Doctor did occasionally shut his eyes to the faults of some of his favorites; for, like other people, he was human, and a little bit disposed to think of his own interests first. He did not mean to be unjust, but the boys under his care thought far more about how he acted than how he meant.

Donald was not long in discovering that the small amount which Aunt Pen had set apart for his expenses was insufficient for the many calls made upon it. Determined to help himself instead of appealing to her, he rented and fitted up a little shop, in which he

proposed to augment his slender resources by cobbling the boots and shoes of the students who felt disposed to patronize him. While living with Mr. Smithers, who was a first-class shoemaker, he had learned to do some very nice cobbling, an industry that now promised to bring him a very fair return. One morning, just as he was coming out of chapel, his attention was directed to the leaky condition of little Fred Norton's shoes. Some of the younger boys had been teasing him about the "outlook of his toes," and the small chap was crying over his misfortune.

"Come with me, and I will fix them," said Donald, glancing down at the worn shoes. Fred followed him to his little den, and while the young cobbler worked, the boy watched his movements with evident admiration.

"How much must I pay you?" asked Fred when the shoes, neatly patched, were handed to him.

"Nothing at all," was the answer. "At least no money, but if any of the boys ask you who mended them tell them that it was Donald Bergh. Go, now! that is all the pay I want."

Fred was very saucy of his nicely mended shoes, and his advertisement brought Donald all the work he had time to do. Even the fastidious Latin Professor, Mr. Ried, came to him for a neat job, which was performed to his entire satisfaction.

Although half supporting himself, Donald kept up with his classes and won golden opinions from both professors and students. Though some of the upstarts made sport of him, and dubbed him "Donald, the cobbler," he was highly esteemed by rich and poor, and was as popular on the playground as in the recitation-room.

Among the students from a distance was Gerald Eadie, son of United States Senator Eadie, from Illinois. The boy's father and Dr. Armitage had been class-mates at Yale many years before, and for the young man the old Doctor had a very strong attachment. So apparent was his preference that it came to be a subject of comment by the students. Gerald was rather a bright, attractive youth, and had he not been pampered by his indulgent parents, he would, undoubtedly, have made his mark in the world, but with plenty of money at his command, and with only an ordinary amount of ambition to urge him on, he gave but poor promise of ever filling the place of honor occupied by his distinguished father.

One evening towards the latter part of March, while Donald was employed in repairing a pair of boots belonging to one of the country fellows, Gerald came into his shop, and holding out a pattern cut from paste-board, asked:

"Can you cut me a pair of leather goggles something after the fashion of this?"

"I think I can," replied Donald, taking the pattern from his hand and fitting it on a long strip of blue leather. With a few swift strokes of a sharp knife the job was finished and passed back for inspection.

"How much is it worth?" asked Eadie, drawing his purse from his pocket.

"Nothing!" was the answer. "I'll not charge you for such a trifle."

"Well, I am sure I am very grateful for the favor, and I'll remember this the next time my shoes need a stitch," said Gerald, as he turned to go.

"All right," responded Donald cheerily, as the door closed after his visitor.

The next moment the door was pushed open again, and Gerald looked in to say, "Don't mention this, please. Of course, it does not amount to much, but I would just as soon the boys would not find it out."

"Trust to me to keep my mouth shut when I don't want to open it," laughed Donald, as he drew the long wax-end through the stiff leather he was sewing.

"You are the fellow for me. I knew you could be trusted or I would not have come to you for help," holding up the goggles.

Donald wondered what great secret could be connected with the blue leather spectacles, but he was too busy to puzzle his brain over such a foolish affair, and before he met Gerald again he had forgotten all about the little episode.

A few mornings later when Billy Graham, the janitor, went into the chapel to ring the bell for prayers a loud "Bah" from a savage-looking sheep, on the rostrum, greeted him. The horned animal sported a new beaver, a swallow-tailed coat, and wore a fine "dickey" of immaculate whiteness, while astride his broad nose, in close proximity to the stylish hat, rested the identical blue leather goggles that had taken shape in the cobbler's den a week previously.

"What has them rogues been up to next?" cried Billy, holding up his hands in astonishment. "If they hain't got fool in the head my name ain't Billy Graham." Then, as if struck with a new idea, he added, "I'll declare to goodness if this here isn't fool's day. I had forgotten that old March marched out last night at midnight." By

the time he had finished his soliloquy the students came pouring into the chapel, and before their merriment had subsided Dr. Armitage's regular tread announced his approach.

"What is the cause of all this confusion?" he demanded, but catching sight of the ridiculous beast on the platform, he strode forward in undignified haste, and began punching the innocent cause of the trouble with his cane.

"Bah, bah!" bawled the sheep, shaking his head in a threatening manner.

"Take the creature out—take him out, I say," screamed the angry man. "Who of you dared offer me this insult? Who, I ask? I am waiting." But as he received no answer, he concluded to wait no longer, and turned on poor Billy with, "You are as big a fool as the boys, Graham. Why don't you take the animal out and stop this racket?"

"Easier said than done," retorted Billy. "Suppose you try your hand at that plaguey knot, Doctor."

The Principal went to work as though he could annihilate Billy, the sheep and the rope by a single jerk, but he was no more successful than the grinning janitor, and several of the students, taking pity on the irritated Doctor, came to his help by proffering penknives.

"Why didn't you think of that sooner?" he said, as Billy severed the strands of the rope and started down the aisle with the struggling sheep.

"Stop your laughing, or I'll make April fools of a score or two of you," he added, rapping furiously on his desk. When order was somewhat restored, he stepped to the door, and calling to Billy, who was far down the stairs, said:—"Keep all those gew-

gaws, for they will give some light on this unpardonable outrage."

"All right, sir," shouted Billy, blowing with his efforts to dislodge his refractory companion.

"Now, boys, I want to know the authors of this unheard-of caper. Some of you are guilty—more than one I judge from the labor poor Billy seems to be expending on the sheep's exit. If you are honorable enough to inform on yourselves, it will be well for you. I will wait a few minutes to hear your statements."

After looking at his watch steadily for five minutes he replaced it in his pocket, saying:

"Very well, I can bide my time. This thing shall be sifted thoroughly, and woe-betide the cowardly perpetrators of this outrage."



CHAPTER V.

THE CASTAWAY.

AFTER prayer Professor Ried turned to Dr. Armitage, and in a low voice said:

"I think young Eadie could give a pretty straight account of this affair if he would."

"What put that into your head?" asked the Doctor a little gruffly.

"You are aware that he is not an early riser, but this morning he was astir before it was clearly light," answered the Professor, in his usual quiet tone.

"What proof have you of this?" inquired Dr. Armitage, impatiently.

"None except my own observation," replied the Professor, evidently enjoying the discomfort of his superior. "You know his room is next to mine, and my morning nap was quite spoiled by the racket he and Scott made at such an early hour."

"Could the boys not get up a little earlier than usual without having any such mischief in view?" asked the old Doctor. "I think that is rather flimsy evidence, or it would be if produced in court, I am certain."

"You interrupted me before I was through," said the other gentleman, still retaining his self-possession. "After fumbling round in the dark for a little, they succeeded in striking a light, and then, having dressed

themselves hastily, they tip-toed out of the room and down the back stairs, pausing just long enough to rap lightly on young Jewell's door. A few minutes later some one came out of No. 24, and went softly down the front stairs. I turned over and tried to go asleep, thinking the boys were going down to the station to meet the early train. I did not hear them when they came back, but they were all there at the breakfast table looking as innocent as if nothing had happened."

"And feeling that way, too, no doubt, for most probably your first conclusion—sending them to the station—was correct; at least it was the most charitable."

Understanding the implied rebuke, Professor Ried said nothing, but quietly following the Principal's example, hurried away to his waiting class.

Later in the day Dr. Armitage met Billy in the hall, and asked if he had heard any thing new concerning the morning disturbance.

"Not a breath, Doctor. Them April-fool fellows has jist covered up every thing that could give 'em away," answered Billy.

"Well, we will uncover some of their roguery for them before they are many days older," returned the Doctor, as he continued his regular, measured tramp.

"I am not so sure of that," chuckled Billy, and then he sat down and laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks at the remembrance of the ridiculous scene he had witnessed in the morning. "My! wasn't he mad though!" he gasped, with a nod in the direction the old gentleman had taken.

The next morning, just after chapel, Dr. Armitage

held up some scraps of blue leather, and fitting them into the curves of the goggles, said:—"Do you see, boys, what a nice fit we have here? These scraps were picked up in Donald Bergh's shoe-shop. For the young gentleman's sake, I hope he can say that he is ignorant of how they reached that particular place."

"It would be impossible for me to make such a statement, when I put them there myself," said Donald, firmly. His face was white, and there was a quiver in his voice, but he remained standing as if expecting something more.

Dr. Armitage looked at him sharply for a few moments, and then he said, with suppressed anger in his voice:

"Then you cut the goggles, I presume?"

"I did, sir, but I was entirely ignorant of the use to which they were to be put," assented Donald.

"That seems unreasonable," said the old Doctor, shaking his head gravely.

"I cut the spectacles just as I would have done a ball cover or whip-lash for any of the fellows—never—thinking that I would be called upon to give an account of my motives."

"You were acquainted with the party for whom you did this little service?" insisted the Doctor.

"That I do not deny," admitted Donald.

"Then name him at once," was the command.

"I cannot do that, for I promised I would say nothing about it," was Donald's quick reply.

"I told you that we need not fear any thing from that source," Dick whispered in Eadie's ear.

"He's a brick!" declared Gerald, without raising his eyes from the book spread out before him.

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One evening Dr. Armitage called in his shop and asked him if he could put a stitch or two in his shoe, which, in spite of polish, persisted in leaking. Receiving an answer in the affirmative, he took a seat, and while Donald worked he drew from him his intentions concerning the future.

"I wish you much success in your undertaking, I am sure," he said, as he took the shoe from the boy's hand. "If you come across any thing you cannot understand come to me for a lift. I would be glad to assist you."

"I scarcely think I shall do that, Doctor, but I will do my best with what aid I can obtain from books," replied Donald, counting out the change from the bill the Doctor had given him.

"Keep it—keep it," urged the Doctor. "Put it in your pocket. You have earned it fairly enough."

"You owe me only a nickel, and I cannot take more than is right," was Donald's quiet response.

Baffled again the Doctor bowed himself out, wishing the young cobbler "good-evening."

Early in May Donald was offered a situation in the establishment of Mannering & Co, at Egbert. He accepted at once, not, however, until he had given them the true version of his standing in the Academy at Easterbrook. He was then told that his staunch regard for his word upon this occasion had much to do with their desire to secure his services. Aunt Pen insisted upon him returning to his old quarters in the stately mansion, and for Christine's sake, he acceded to her wishes.

Before the close of the year Dick was sent home in disgrace, and his dissipated habits were not long in closing Aunt Pen's doors against him. To the old

Aunt first, and then to every person who would listen, he told the true story of the joke which he and his friends had played upon Donald.



CHAPTER VI.

MISJUDGED.

WHAT a cheery face it was that Donald Bergh carried into the People's Bank that bright December morning! The cashier took the check from his hand, and after glancing over it counted out a number of bills, wrapped a paper around them, and then, pushing the package towards him, nodded his head, as much as to say, "Take it and go."

Donald took up the roll, slipped it into his breast-pocket, buttoned his overcoat up tightly, and then hurried away.

"Halloo, Donald! I have been waiting for you an age," said a well-known voice, as he closed the door.

"Not that long, I am certain, Dick," answered Donald. "It is not more than ten minutes since I went in there, and you were not here then. But what are you after, anyway? I know you have some purpose, and I am in great haste."

"How is Aunt Pen off for chink now?" asked Dick, lowering his voice.

"You know, Dick, that her purse strings have been held pretty tightly of late. You cannot expect any thing from her, I am sure. But we must not stand here talking. We will attract attention. Let us move on," said Donald, turning in a direction oppo-

site the one leading to Mr. Mannering's establishment.

"It is a pity that Donald Bergh insists in making an associate of that profligate Dick Jewell," said Mr. Bateman, the cashier, with a meaning nod in the direction of the door.

"Cousins!" volunteered the clerk addressed. "You know the old saying—"Birds of a feather—"

"No good comes of such companionship," persisted Bateman, turning indifferently to his account book.

Mr. Mannering nodded when Donald placed the roll upon his desk, but he finished his writing before opening the package. Thinking all was right, Donald went to wait on a customer, and nearly an hour elapsed before he was summoned to the office of his employer.

"For what amount did that check call?" asked the gentleman abruptly, as Donald made his appearance.

"Five hundred dollars, you said."

"Did you count the bills you gave me?"

"No! Mr. Bateman rolled them together and slipped a rubber around the package. I placed it in my breast-pocket, and did not touch it again until I gave it to you. Is there any thing wrong about it?"

"This money is short by one hundred dollars," answered Mr. Mannering, throwing the roll of bills toward the frightened boy.

Donald ran over them, hastily at first, and then counted them carefully, noticing particularly that no two bills were sticking together. Satisfied that he had made no mistake in counting, he looked at Mr. Mannering as if half-expecting him to solve the puzzling question, but his face was white and

stern, and when he spoke his voice sounded unnaturally harsh.

"Are you certain that you wrote the check for the amount intended?" faltered Donald, changing color painfully.

"I never was more certain of any thing in my life, boy," was Mr. Mannering's withering reply.

"Then Mr. Bateman must have made a mistake," was Donald's quick rejoinder.

"Mr. Bateman makes no mistakes, sir," said the merchant decidedly, shaking his head by way of emphasis.

"It could not have slipped out of the paper," said the boy desperately, every moment adding to his embarrassment. "Mr. Bateman has surely made a mistake which he will readily rectify. I will go at once and see him."

"We will go together," said Mr. Mannering, buttoning up his coat. "Mr. Bateman may be able to throw some light on the case, though I predict before starting that he knows nothing about that missing hundred dollars. He is an honest, upright, methodical man, and was never known to make a blunder."

His tone, more than his words, vexed Donald, and the walk of half a dozen blocks was taken in silence.

Going directly to the cashier when they entered the building, Mr. Mannering asked abruptly:—"Mr. Bateman, what was the amount of the check you cashed for us an hour ago?"

"In the neighborhood of five hundred dollars, I think. Just five hundred," he added, referring to his book. "Was it not satisfactory?"

"Not by a hundred dollars," replied Mr. Man-

nering, sharply. "It could not be possible that you made a mistake, I suppose?"

"You are the first man that ever intimated such a thing to me. No, sir! I permit no mistakes, but to satisfy you, and make assurance doubly sure, I will run over my balance."

After making his fingers fly among the crisp bills for a few minutes, he shook his head, saying, "All is right here, sir."

"That is the decision I expected. Donald insisted that the mistake must have arisen with you. He is certain that the money was not out of his pocket from the time he placed it there until he delivered it to me."

"Strange, indeed!" muttered the cashier. "Was not that your Cousin Dick Jewell who was waiting for you at the door?" he asked, turning his eyes full upon Donald.

"No—yes—that is, he was not waiting for me; at least I did not know that he was there until I went out," stammered Donald.

"O! I thought it might have been an arrangement between you. He certainly expected some one. You remember, Gilbert, I mentioned the vicious appearance of the fellow, and spoke disapprovingly of young Bergh associating with him at the time," retorted Mr. Bateman, addressing the latter part of his remarks to the clerk whose attention he had enlisted at the time.

"I was ignorant of his whereabouts until he spoke to me at the door," insisted Donald.

"I chanced to notice that you turned down South street instead of going directly back to your place of employment," said Mr. Bateman, with a look that the

boy fully interpreted. He did not explain, however, that he had left his desk for the express purpose of watching him, nor that he had observed the vagabond Cousin crossing the street and stationing himself at the door after Donald had entered the Bank.

The boy hesitated a moment, but knowing that three pair of suspicious eyes were upon him, he admitted that he had gone out of the way to talk with Dick.

"Why did you choose that round-about way instead of the honest, open, direct one?" asked Mr. Mannering.

"Dick wanted to have a quiet talk with me, and there was no chance on the busy crowded street," faltered Donald, fumbling nervously with his watch-chain.

"So you chose the back alleys for your reformatory work," sneered Mr. Mannering. "I confess I do not agree with your tactics in this case. You surely have not shown your usual good sense in dealing with that good-for-nothing Cousin. If he was anxious to confide his troubles to you, why did you not invite him to walk back to the store with you?"

"You forget that he was forbidden to set foot in your establishment," reminded Donald.

"Then—under that ban—you should not have gone out of your way to accommodate him," returned Mr. Mannering.

"Dick is not the kind of a lad you want for an associate, my boy," said Mr. Bateman. "It must have been something very important that he could not impart during the time you conversed at the door."

"Dick was in trouble, poor fellow; for that matter he is always in trouble—but he tells me things that he would not like other people to know," admitted Donald.

"That is just what I supposed. If he had wanted other folks to know what mischief he was up to, he would have walked right in here, and made what arrangements he thought best with you," said Mr. Bateman, with a sarcastic smile.

"I am about all the friend the poor fellow has left, and I have not the heart to turn a deaf ear to his requests for help," said Donald.

"Not if you are injured thereby?" asked Mr. Bateman.

"Not if I am injured," replied Donald, without flinching an inch.



CHAPTER VII.

SEEKING AN EXPLANATION.

MR. MANNERING made no comment on Donald's admission, while in the presence of others, but his compressed lips and ominous silence argued nothing in favor of the trembling boy at his side.

"I would not be in that chap's place for all the old gentleman is worth," said the clerk, as the door closed after the visitors.

"It is a bad piece of business—a bad piece of business," repeated Mr. Bateman, shaking his head soberly. "Pity, too, for the lad is a go-ahead sort of a fellow, and heretofore had the entire confidence of his employers."

"He will get a free pass to the city prison now, or I'll miss my guess," returned Gilbert.

Mr. Bateman glanced up quickly, and there was a troubled look in his eyes as he ventured, "He is a great favorite with Mr. Mannering."

"That will stand for nothing when he finds he has been deceived," answered the clerk.

"I trust he will be as lenient as possible," said the cashier, soberly. "No doubt that outcast of a Cousin laid the plot. You know they were brought up together, and some affection seems to still exist,

though the ill-natured Aunt set Dick afloat months ago."

"And he still remains a hanger-on, I guess. At least, he has no visible means of earning his support, and yet he always manages to get something to eat and drink," volunteered the clerk. "There he goes this minute rigged out in a new suit—hat and all," he cried, as Dick emerged from a restaurant on the opposite side of the street.

Both of the men hurried to the door, but the transformed rogue, seeing that he was attracting attention, quickened his step, and in a moment disappeared around a corner.

"Mr. Mannering ought to be put on the track of the scoundrel," said the clerk, as he closed the door.

"Let him look after this ugly business himself," suggested Mr. Bateman. "I pity that young fellow in his clutches, and do not feel like bringing him to grief."

The clerk looked keenly into the speaker's face. He was not accustomed to hear such words from the upright man before him.

"You see, Gilbert, I have a boy of my own just about Donald Bergh's age, and there is a tender spot in my heart for all young lads. I do not know how soon my boy may need befriending. That old golden rule is a very good rule to live by, and to judge other people by as well," said Mr. Bateman.

Customers coming in at this juncture the subject was dropped.

Neither Mr. Mannering nor Donald spoke until they reached the store, and then, in obedience to a sign from his employer, the boy followed him into his office. Mr. Mannering dropped into a chair, and for

a moment bowed his head upon his hands; then looking up he said sternly:

"Donald, I cannot express the pain I have experienced at the strange turn things have taken to-day. For more than two years I have loved and trusted you, and if any one had charged you with dishonesty, I would have defended your fair name with the last dollar I possess. If your wages were insufficient for your wants why did you not apply to me for help?"

The poor fellow was so oppressed by the gravity of the charge made against him that it was some minutes before he could control his voice so as to assert his innocence.

"I beg of you, do not add to your crime by denying it," interrupted Mr. Mannering, with a wave of his hand. "I would rather have lost five hundred dollars than to have suffered betrayal at your hands. Confess it all to me now, and no one shall ever reproach you for your treachery."

"You charge me with a crime I never committed, Mr. Mannering. How then can I make reparation? How can I confess to a thing I did not do?" begged Donald, trembling from head to foot.

"Boy, why will you persist in bringing disgrace upon yourself? You are aware that mercy is not in the catalogue of your Aunt Penelope's virtues. If you will confide frankly and trustfully in me, I will assist you, and the tale of your wrong-doing may never reach her ears. Think well now before you speak."

Straightening himself up to his full height, Donald replied in a clear, firm voice:

"Much as I regret giving her pain, I cannot shield myself by taking refuge beneath a falsehood. I am

innocent, though I am compelled to admit that circumstances are very much against me."

"You knew the character of your Cousin Dick, and should not have thrown yourself in his power," responded Mr. Mannering, quietly ignoring Donald's protest. "You knew, too, that neither your Aunt nor your employers approved of the intimacy that seems still to exist between you and that graceless scamp who has been the means of bringing you into trouble. No doubt the fellow was aware of your business at the bank and followed you there for a purpose."

"You wrong Dick as well as me. He knew nothing about the roll of bills tucked away in my pocket—at least the subject was not so much as mentioned between us. Had he surmised my business, and proposed appropriating some of the money, I would have protected it with my life, if necessary. I am sure he is quite innocent of the wrong you impute to him."

"Then what was he after?" urged Mr. Mannering, and his imperative tone convinced Donald that no evasion would answer this time, so in a very few words he explained all that had passed between them.

"And I am to understand that you really furnished him with money to buy a suit of clothes?" exclaimed Mr. Mannering in astonishment.

"What else could I have done, sir? He is going to turn over a new leaf and start fair in the world, and no one could begin to live a respectable life in such tattered garments," answered Donald.

"A respectable fiddlesticks!" exclaimed the merchant, irritably. "Do you have the remotest expectation of such a transformation occurring?"

"He promised to go away and remain among strangers until he had redeemed the past," answered Donald.

"That was some inducement to send him away, truly," retorted Mr. Mannering. "However, I am of the opinion that you would have manifested more wisdom by putting the suit upon your own back. I understood that your Aunt invested your small earning in the Saving Bank. How is it, then, that you have ten or twelve dollars at command for this vagrant Cousin?"

"My Uncle Robert Lee sent me twenty dollars for a birthday present. The next week he died, and I never broke the bill until this morning," answered Donald.

"You can produce this letter in evidence, I presume," queried the relentless man, watching keenly the effects of his words.

"I fear I cannot. By some means it was misplaced soon after its arrival, and all my search hitherto has failed to bring it light," was the hesitating reply.

Mr. Mannering kept his eyes fixed steadily upon him for a few minutes, and then, with an impatient gesture, said:—"I am disappointed in you, Donald. If you would be straightforward and frank with me—even after all that has passed—I would stand up for you. This prevaricating does not become a Bergh, and if you know what is best for you, you will not allow a breath of this scandal to reach the ears of your Aunt. This story about your Uncle's letter is too shallow to bear repetition. It is not faceable, and any one would know from its absurdity that you were not an adept in the art of lying."

The crimson blood mounted to Donald's face, but

he was too indignant to make a reply. Compressing his lips tightly, he took a step backward, and then stopped, as if expecting other invectives to follow.

Mr. Mannering waited a few moments, but as no answer came, he turned to his desk, counted out twenty dollars, and pushing it towards the silent figure, said:

"Here is your half month's wages. The time is not quite up, but I will pay you the full amount, as you will find use for it."

"I will not touch it until that hundred dollars is found, but I do not wish you to infer from this that I admit the charge you have preferred against me."

"Admit it or not, there is no court in the United States that would return a verdict in your favor," replied Mr. Mannering, irritated at the boy's obstinacy.

"Is that all?" asked Donald, with as much calmness as if addressing his employer on some ordinary subject.

"That is all," returned Mr. Mannering, in a firm voice. Without a moment's hesitation, Donald turned on his heel and walked out.

CHAPTER VIII.

LEAVING HOME.

“WHAT has brought you home at this hour of the day?” demanded Aunt Pen, as Donald entered the apartment where she was sitting. “It is not ten o’clock yet,” glancing up at the little time-piece on the mantle.

“I have been discharged, Aunt,” replied Donald, huskily.

“Discharged! What mischief have you been into now?” cried the old woman shortly.

“None, Aunt Pen,” was the answer. “I am innocent of the crime Mr. Mannering charges me with.”

“Come, come, my boy! That will not do. Mr. Mannering is an upright man, and would not implicate you in any wrong-doing without having first satisfied himself of your guilt,” replied Aunt Pen. “You must have done something dreadful to demand such swift punishment.”

“The crime he imputes to me is dreadful, but, as I told you before, I am not guilty. His charges are cruel and false.”

“Tell me what they are, and then I can form my own judgment about that,” urged Aunt Pen. “You don’t expect me to guess, do you?” with an impatient jerk at the yarn she was winding.

Donald related all that had passed in as few words

as possible, but short as he made his explanation, he was several times interrupted by the angry woman, and it was with considerable difficulty that he finally succeeded in making her understand both sides of the troublesome story.

When he was through she fixed her angry eyes on his white face, and said with a sneer:

"Donald Bergh, you are a disgrace to the honorable name you bear. I am ashamed of you. Any person with the least bit of common sense could see that your story was a pumped up affair—invented to suit the occasion," snapped the old woman. "It's just what might have been expected from one who, in spite of all warnings, persists in associating with the scum of creation."

"What do you mean, Aunt?" demanded Donald, his dark eyes flashing indignantly.

"I mean just exactly what I say, sir. You have been told over and over again to have no dealings with that scrape-grace Dick, and if he has gotten you into trouble all I have got to say is, 'Get out of the scrape the best way you can.'"

"I did not come to you for sympathy, Aunt. I knew better than to expect any mercy at your hands," replied Donald, proudly.

"Then what in the world did you expect?" queried Aunt Pen, with an impatient shrug of her shoulder.

"I expected you to believe Mr. Mannering's statement, and to follow his example by turning me out of doors," replied Donald.

"Then you'll not be disappointed when I tell you that your presence here is no longer agreeable," she said.

"Not in the least, Aunt. I have never deceived

you in all the years I have lived under your roof, yet, because circumstances are not in my favor, you are ready to condemn me without even a show of a trial," remarked Donald, for the first time showing signs of agitation.

"Tell me what good a public trial would do? I think you might be grateful to Mr. Mannering for allowing you to escape so easily. Why, boy, don't you know that the penitentiary would be your doom were you found guilty?"

"I would not be found guilty, Aunt Pen. I am innocent, and disinterested parties might judge less partially than you or Mr. Mannering."

"Humph! You do not seem to have much faith in our integrity," retorted Aunt Pen, a little stiffly.

"I think you are both honest in your convictions, but you have not enough charity to admit of the possibility of a mistake. You are unjust to Dick, too, for he never saw the roll of money that was lost out of my pocket on the way—and I am pretty certain that he knew nothing about it."

"How did you come to give him money when you had been commanded to let him severely alone?"

"If you had seen him, Aunt, you would have pitied him, I am sure. The poor fellow is sorry on account of the trouble he has given you, and I honestly believe he wishes to reform. You know there would be very small chances of turning over a new leaf while clothed in rags."

"I'd like to see the leaf Dick turns. He knows you are fool enough to believe all he says, and when he gets what he wants, he keeps quiet until he has spent it. Then he comes back with a pitiful story, and you are fool enough to believe him."

"He'll not come back this time, Aunt. I believe he is in earnest now, and he has promised to go away and not trouble you any more."

"I sincerely hope he will keep his promise, Donald, but, torment that he has been, I would much rather put up with him than have you steal to help him off," urged Aunt Pen, a little softened.

"Why will you insist that the money I gave Dick was stolen, Aunt? Did I not explain how it came into my possession?" asked Donald.

"Why did you not tell me about the present you received? You do not get favors from your friends so often that you would be likely to pass them over so carelessly."

"I intended to spend part of that money purchasing Christmas presents, and as you and Christine are my only relatives here I wished to give you a genuine surprise," faltered Donald.

"It would have been a surprise, indeed. I am not in the habit of being remembered in that way often. If you can show me the letter in which that money came I will be satisfied that you are telling the truth; otherwise, in the absence of proof, I must believe that you never received it. It would be very odd to lose a letter under the circumstances you describe."

"I am not in the habit of taking special care of my letters, and it was not until after Uncle's death—a month after it had been received—that I tried to look it up. As it was his last memento, I was anxious to keep it."

"That will not stand the test, Donald," replied Aunt Pen, shaking her head wisely. "You must manufacture a better excuse, sir, if you hope to convince people of your innocence. I wish I had

not consented to take you off the pauper's list. It seems that I am to have nothing but trouble with the children whom I have taken to my home and heart."

"A mighty small share of her heart has she distributed among them," sneered Christine from behind the kitchen door.

"Dick was a black sheep from his babyhood—he was born to an unlucky fate, but I expected better things from you. I did, indeed. It is the Lee blood in your veins asserting itself. No Bergh ever committed a villainous act. Your mother was of low birth."

"That is enough on that subject, Aunt Pen," exclaimed Donald, with rising color. "You can say what you please about me, but the moment you touch the character of my sainted mother all the tiger in my nature comes to the surface. She was the best woman in the world. I have nothing but hallowed memories of her beautiful life."

"Humph! You are disposed to be complimentary. I knew your mother long before you were born. She was only a poor music teacher—good enough in her proper sphere, no doubt, but she was no match for a Bergh."

"Because she was entirely too good for the best Bergh that ever lived," exclaimed Christine, suddenly appearing on the scene.

"Who asked your opinion, miss? Go back to your work, and do not meddle with what does not concern you," retorted Aunt Pen, sharply. "Go, I say."

Christine stepped back slowly until at a safe distance and then, in a defiant manner, repeated the assertion at which her Aunt had taken offence.

"Where did you get your information concerning your Cousin Norman's wife, Miss Impudence?" asked Aunt Pen, with an attempt to subdue the girl with one of her withering looks.

"Donald is so different from Dick and me, and I am sure he owes all his advantages to the influence of his gentle mother. His bringing up was much more refined and humane than ours, and he shows it. My mother died when I was too small to know my loss, but all the boys and girls that I am acquainted with are genuine copies of the mother's in the homes."

"If you are sample of my work I acknowledge that I have made a desperate failure," answered Aunt Pen, eyeing the girl from head to foot.

"The conclusion is not very flattering, is it?" asked Christine scornfully, turning slowly round that the old woman might complete her survey more perfectly. "I am free to say that both Dick and I are bad grafts on the home tree, but I could take an oath this minute that Cousin Donald did not steal the money that in some way disappeared so mysteriously. It's my opinion that Mr. Bateman knows more about its whereabouts than he lets on."

"Christine! How dare you make such insinuations," began Aunt Pen, but the girl had disappeared, and she consoled herself by giving Donald a little of her mind concerning wicked Christine.

"The hundred dollars that I invested for you shall be turned over to Mr. Mannering to make up his loss," said Aunt Pen, coolly, at the close of the interview.

"I protest against such a measure," retorted Donald, angrily. "I have no right to give him my small earnings—at least not until a jury of twelve men find me guilty of the robbery."

"I am your guardian, and I'll decide that matter myself, and if you had the least bit of gratitude you would rejoice that you are at liberty to repair the damage instead of being compelled to spend half your life in the State prison."

Too angry to contend longer with the unreasonable woman, Donald bade her good-by, and went up to his room to pack his satchel. Once more, before leaving for good, he made an exhaustive search for that letter, which, even yet, might save his name from the brand of "thief." Despairing of finding it, he put his room to rights and passed down the stairs and out of the front door.

"Were you going away without so much as a word to me?" asked Christine, emerging from behind one of the great pillars of the old-fashioned house.

"I intended to go round by the kitchen. . I wanted to thank you for coming to the defence of my dead mother, when she was assailed, as well as to say good-by. No, indeed, Christine, I shall never forget you, for you have always been a true friend to me. You must think a little about me when I am gone."

"You know better than to make such a request of me. I'll think of you every day and every hour, for things will be dreadful dull with both you and Dick away," said the girl, hoarsely. "And I will do more than think of you, Donald, I'm bound to hunt down that thief and clear you of the false charge. Don't look at me as though you had no confidence in my ability. I am only a poor, ugly, disagreeable girl, but all the sunshine I ever enjoyed was of your making, and I will not rest until your wrong is righted."

"Thank you, Christine, I believe you will do all in your power, but I fear I am doomed to live a roaming

life. However, I will try to make the best of my hard lot, and I hope you will be happy. Try to live as agreeable as possible with Aunt. Some day she will understand your true value, and reward you for all your vexations."

Christine laughed—a little, low, mocking laugh—but before she had time to answer Aunt Pen's shrill voice was heard calling, "Christine! Christine! where are you?"

"There! You'd better go," she said, and with a warm clasp of the hand, and a kind good-by, Donald turned away.



CHAPTER IX.

IN SEARCH OF WORK.

DONALD paused only once to take a farewell look at the stately mansion that had sheltered him for the last three years. Not a sign of life was visible, and except in Aunt Pen's room all the shutters in the front of the great building were tightly closed.

"It is a grand old house, but not a home," he said thoughtfully. "Poor Aunt Pen shuts all the sunshine out from her heart just as religiously as she does from her house. I pity her, and if I were going away with an untarnished name I would rejoice that I was getting away from the chilly atmosphere of a habitation that could never be any thing more than a house."

At this point in the soliloquy the shrill whistle of the engine, and the rumbling of the train in the distance, reminded him that he had no time to lose.

Procuring his ticket, he boarded the train just as it was moving off. There was a heavy weight at his heart as he watched familiar objects receding from his view.

In spite of the circumstances under which he was going away, he felt a little homesick as the old scenes gave place to new objects and new faces.

Although he had very little money left in his pocket-book, the thought that he was free sent the blood coursing proudly through his veins.

Knowing that his slender purse would not admit of much sight-seeing, Donald's first business after he arrived in a Western city was to look about him for work. From the reports that he had heard about the demands of the West, he expected to obtain employment without any trouble, but the first day's experience convinced him that he had made a great mistake. Business was brisk and people seemed to be rushing along at a great rate, but the supply of laborers was equal to the demand.

Day after day he paced to and fro only to hear the stereotyped "not in need of any more help." The week closed dolefully enough for the lonely boy. Sunday morning dawned clear and bright, and remembering the promise he had made his mother before she died, Donald joined the crowd on the street and followed until he came to an imposing church edifice. Great masses of people were passing in through its hospitable door. He waited, thinking some one would invite him to enter, as they did at the little chapel where he worshipped at home; however, except now and then an impolite stare, he attracted no attention. With the first clear, deep tones of the organ, he ventured within, stopping directly under an arch of evergreen in which immortelles were so interwoven as to spell "Welcome." For a moment the grandeur of the church dazzled him, then he noticed that others, like himself, remained standing. He was sure that their presence was no mystery to the usher, for he elbowed his way past them to wait on fine gentlemen and ladies, whom he conducted to soft cushioned seats.

The church was not crowded, and in many elegant pews there were vacant seats, but there seemed to be

no room for plainly dressed people like himself. At the close of the voluntary, the minister arose and invoked a blessing upon the bowed heads of his people. After this the choir joined in that matchless hymn:

"Joy to the world the Lord has come,
Let earth prepare him room."

The singing was artistic and rendered according to the most approved style, but Donald's face clouded, and he wondered if Jesus should come to this church in his humility if they would permit him to occupy one of the empty seats in the many half-filled pews.

Just as the last echo of the precious song was dying away the clear, well-modulated voice of the gray-haired pastor fell like a benediction on the assembled multitude. The prayer was tender and affecting, its grammar and rhetoric faultless, and yet Donald heard nothing but the music of the sweet-sounding voice.

The words of the text were:—"Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled!"

"Compel them to come in and stand and wait," thought Donald, irreverently. "And bid them 'welcome' to creep under the beautiful arch and shiver from the icy reception they receive."

Though the sermon was eloquent and at times wondrously pathetic, Donald listened indifferently, as though he had neither part nor lot in the matter. Somehow he pitied the preacher, for he thought he was expounding a gospel of which he had no heart knowledge.

At the close of the service he went back to his lonely lodging more than ever before doubting the sincerity of professing Christians. A warm clasp of

a friendly hand, or a kind word of cheer from some one of that large congregation, might have saved Donald from years of doubt and uncertainty. Only his mother's religion seemed genuine in his sight. Often he would say to himself, "She believed in God, and I believed in her, and do yet." In these dark days this was about all the Christianity he professed or adhered to.

As the days dragged slowly along his slim resources dwindled away in spite of his rigid economy. Instead of his regular meals at a cheap restaurant, he allowed himself only a cup of coffee in the morning and contented himself with crackers or a sandwich during the day.

Almost any other person would have given up and looked up another situation, but there was so much persistency in Donald Bergh's make-up that nothing short of starvation could have driven him away from the city where he first entered. "If I give up in my first attempt at bread-winning I will never succeed," he told himself, when ready to give up in despair.

It was Saturday evening, and a blinding storm of sleet and snow had changed the mellow rays of a half-Indian summer day into the icy grip of winter. Donald's last dollar was gone, and more from habit than with any hope of securing employment, he took his hat from the tab'le and went out among the pedestrians who were crowding the slushy pavements. He walked along busy with his own distracting thought, wondering if his indomitable pluck would get him out of the trouble into which it had plunged him. A sharp voice near him arrested him with:—"Why are those boxes left standing on the pavement? Where is Wolf that he does not attend to his business?"

"Gone home!" replied some one near the door.

"Gone home! Then get some other person to remove this trash and pay him off," returned the first voice, decisively.

"Shall I clear your pavement, sir?" asked Donald, respectfully.

The man eyed him from head to foot, then he answered angrily:

"Do you wish to insult me, sir?"

"Not at all!" replied Donald. "I am looking for a job of work, and I am willing to do any thing honest."

"Then remove those boxes and come to me for your pay. Jones, show this fellow where to pile this rubbish, and see that it is done properly," saying which he turned and went in, closing the door after him.

Jones looked at him, guessed shrewdly the situation and took pains to show his authority. When Donald had finished the work he went to Mr. Thayer as directed. After receiving his money he said in a subdued voice:

"If you have a vacancy in your establishment I would be glad to fill it."

The gentleman whistled softly, then he turned and looked the speaker squarely in the face. After he had satisfied himself that the boy was in earnest, he replied:

"The place I have on hand would suit a big, stout Irishman better than a fine gentleman like yourself."

"I am not above any honest work," Donald returned. "I will do my best to please you if you give me a trial."

"Very well! Go to work. If you perform Wolf's duties you shall have his wages."

He was then turned over to Jones, who lost no opportunity of exhibiting his insolent authority. Donald was ready to rebel, but remembering that he had begged the place of a lackey, he determined to accept a lackey's treatment.

The next morning the storm had vanished, and the sun shone out clear and bright. With his characteristic persistence, Donald arranged his toilet carefully and took his stand in the identical spot he had occupied in the grand church on the previous Sunday. His main reason for returning was to note how long he would be permitted to stand unnoticed. The words of the text this day were:—"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

While Donald was weighing this congregation, and measuring its Christianity by the golden rule, One greater than he was holding the scale of justice over his head, and he, too, was found wanting.



CHAPTER X.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

THE next morning, while dusting and arranging the lace window, Donald was startled by a sharp voice near him saying:

"Fool! have you no more sense than to allow your brush to come in contact with those delicate fabrics?"

That cool, exasperating voice could belong to only one person in the world, and it was a very white, angry face that Donald turned towards his old school-mate—Gerald Eadie. For a few minutes the two young men stood regarding each other attentively, then Gerald, seeing that they were attracting attention, said haughtily:

"If it ever again becomes necessary for me to speak to you about those laces, I will discharge you immediately. Such unpardonable carelessness cannot be tolerated in this establishment."

"By what right do you presume to dictate to me?" Donald asked, in a low, but very distinct, voice.

"You will find out if you use such language in my presence," Eadie answered, his face livid with suppressed rage.

"Where did you pick up that rascal?" he inquired of Mr. Thayer a little later, knowing that he had witnessed the unpleasant, but amusing, encounter.

The gentleman explained that Wolf was off on

another spree, and that the young man in question had been installed in his place.

"Then see that he keeps Wolf's place," Eadie retorted, angrily. "If he ever flies at me again in that fashion I'll kick him out of the door with as little compunction as I would a dog. I'll not put up with him, I cannot."

"But then, Eadie, you must admit that you began on him a little rough-shod," Mr. Thayer replied, trying to conceal a smile. He had really admired the pluck of the newcomer, though he dared not give expression to his feelings.

"And so he proposes to ignore me entirely," murmured Donald, turning to complete his work; while Eadie growled, "I was not mistaken then. I thought that erect form and proud head could belong to no one except Donald Bergh. What brought him here, I wonder? Surely he cannot have fallen so low as to be compelled to seek such employment. He shall not stay here, or if he does I'll make things hot for him."

For several days after this Eadie passed and repassed the new porter without noticing him, apparently, but more than once a keen observer could have detected a sinister look in the small gray eyes when they chanced to rest upon the well-dressed menial. Donald understood him and tried to keep out of his way, for he was apprehensive that another such encounter would cost him his situation. Most certainly he took no special delight in the rough work assigned him, but it provided him with the plain necessities of life, and he had no desire to be thrust out of it until he could step from it into a higher and more lucrative position. He did not understand why

Eadie should be so bitter against him, as he had done nothing to injure him in any way.

On emorning while Donald was busy, Gerald came in more out of sorts than customary. Something outside had ruffled his usual good-nature, and the unfortunate porter was the first one he met on whom he could vent his pent-up rage. Glancing around him for some cause of complaint, he exclaimed, sharply :

“Porter, how does it come that my spittoon has not been cleaned since you came? Attend to it at once, and do not have me to remind you of it again.”

The duster fell from Donald’s hand as he retorted with much warmth:

“You will wait awhile if you depend on me performing such work.”

The clerks around exchanged glances, and some of them laughed outright, but Eadie coolly responded:

“Then I give you ten minutes to leave, for this is a part of your work.”

“By what authority do you utter your commands?” inquired Donald, folding his arms as if preparing for an entended discussion.

“By the authority that an employer is supposed to exercise over a hireling,” was the taunting answer.

“I made no engagement with you, sir,” said Donald, haughtily. Then turning to Mr. Thayer, who had come out of his office during the colloquy, he inquired, “Is such drudgery included in the labor I am to perform?”

Mr. Thayer nodded affirmatively, and then in a tone of apology said:—“You remember that I intimated that the work would not suit you.”

“But I can suit myself to the work. I never break a bargain, and if this is part of my duty I will do

it, no matter how offensive it may prove," Donald answered, with a decided ring in his quiet voice.

"It is well you understand your place so thoroughly," Mr. Thayer said, a little severely. "I trust you will keep it without being reminded of what is expected of you so frequently."

"I am to obey this fellow, then, whenever he sees fit to command me?" Donald inquired, with a slight inclination of his head in the direction of young Eadie.

Gerald's eyes flashed indignantly, and an angry flush dyed his dark face, but before he could speak Mr. Thayer answered with a touch of reproof in his voice, "That *fellow* is junior partner in this firm, and hereafter when you have occasion to address him distinguish him as Mr. Eadie."

"I will try to remember the name," Donald returned, with a low bow and a peculiar stress of voice that no one but Eadie understood.

"Where shall I find your perfume-box, Mr. Eadie?" he continued, turning his fine eyes searchingly upon Gerald.

"Do you usually look for such articles in people's faces?" retorted the young man, with a frown and an impatient gesture.

Without replying Donald took charge of the spittoon, and with the dignity of a judge walked away to dispose of its contents. A suppressed cheer from the clerks near at hand was promptly checked by Mr. Thayer's finger of warning. Gerald bit his lip with vexation. He was aware that Donald had the best of it, and he was provoked at his own impatience that had caused him to act so childishly.

"Can I do any thing further for your comfort, Mr.

Eadie?" Donald inquired, as he replaced the object of contention.

"I'll pay you back for this impudence, you dog," Gerald snarled from between his teeth. "An Eadie never forgets an insult—*never*. You will repent this day, you mean cur. If Mr. Thayer had not been present I would have discharged you on the spot, you scamp. A beggarly wretch! and you dared raise a laugh at my expense."

"To whom are you indebted for your place of trust to-day? Who suffered for your crime in the old school-days? You were not the coward who stood quietly by and allowed that same beggarly wretch to be sent home in disgrace, I suppose?"

"Leave my presence, you vagabond," growled Gerald, in a suppressed voice. "Repeat that slander here and I will have you in prison in less than an hour."

"It is the truth and you dare not deny it," Donald insisted. "Shall I repeat the story of your selfishness; ah, worse—cruelty?"

"Who would believe the story of a tramp refuted by the wealthy Gerald Eadie?" he sneered. "Even if you could establish your tale I am able to buy both judge and jury."

"You seem to put a very low estimate upon the morals of your city," Donald returned, as he went back to his work.

"What brought him here? I must get rid of him at any cost," Gerald soliloquized. "I would buy him off, but he would annihilate me with a look from those great eyes if I would mention such a thing. I will not provoke his curse, but fair or foul he shall not stay here to tantalize me. Of course, he did me

a kindness once, but that idiot Cousin Dick had to give us all away, and I always thought that Donald had a hand in getting a confession out of Dick. It would not be like him either," he admitted. •

About three weeks after Donald had been employed by Mr. Thayer a pale, rough-looking man, closely bundled about the neck, came into the basement where he was at work, and said, in a strangely muffled voice:

"Young man, do you know that you are a murderer?"

At first Donald thought the man was demented, and paid little attention to what he was saying; but as he kept repeating, "I say you are a murderer; do you not hear me?" Donald turned upon him and fiercely demanded, "Whom did I kill?"

"My wife and children," the man returned, excitedly. "You took my place in this store—you a fine gentleman with plenty o' book-learnin' took poor Wolf's place, and his wife and children are starvin'. There is not a bite in the house this mornin', and for three full days we've had but a peck o' corn-meal and a few 'taters."

"I know nothing about it, my good man," said Donald, with misty eyes. "I was told that the porter had left, and I accepted the situation until something better would turn up. But why did you leave?"

"I was sick, and the children was sick, and Biddy, poor soul, sint word to the boss, but he says niver a word did he git at all, at all."

"I'll not stand in your way, my man. If Mr. Thayer is willing to take you back, I have no objections to your going to work immediately," Donald answered.

"Och! may the holy Virgin bless your swate soul, sir; but what will become of you, sir?" cried the grateful Wolf.

"I'll look out for myself, and as I have been the innocent cause of your suffering, I will divide what little I have with you," he said, taking three crisp one dollar bills from his slim pocket-book, and forcing them into the brawny hands of the Irishman. "Take that and use it for your family. It will keep starvation from your door for a few days."

"I can't take your money, sir, not I," returned Wolf, wiping his eyes with the sleeve of his coat.

"It really belongs to you, as I unwittingly cheated you out of your situation. I am desirous of making restitution, so far as I am able. Why did you not come to me sooner? If you had made known your case the first time I saw you here there would have been no occasion for your destitute condition to day."

"It's no fault o' your'n, and none but a born gentleman would have acted as ye have done. I'll pay ye back ivery cint, or my name is not Patrick Wolf."

"Never mind about that. Go and get your breakfast and then come back to work."

"And this is the price of my bread and butter," Donald muttered as the man went out. "A family starving to make room for me. I wonder if every place in the world is gained by displacing the more rightful owner."

Before Mr. Thayer had got settled to business that morning, he was interrupted by a decided knock.

"Well," he said impatiently, as the new porter entered.

"I wish to return the place I now occupy to your former porter," he explained.

"Do the boys make it too warm for you?" the merchant asked, with a smile.

"I can endure their slurs, but not the thought that I am keeping a family out of its daily bread," Donald answered, quickly.

"O, ho! Pat has been interviewing you, I see. You must be faint-hearted to believe all the tales of woe that you hear. Business can't wait a week or two to see whether a man is going to die of a fever or not," laughed Mr. Thayer, uneasily. "A conscience is an inconvenient thing to have some times."

"This man did not succumb to the fever it seems, but there is much danger of a local famine in his neighborhood just at present if I do not step out of his way. Why did you not tell me about him a week or two ago?"

"Business is business, young man, and our new porter suited us quite as well as he suited himself to his business," Mr. Thayer remarked, with a dry laugh.

"You will take him back?" Donald inquired, coloring at the gentleman's quotation of his own words.

"I have nothing against Pat, but what will you do?" asked he.

"I'll find something to keep me out of mischief, never fear," Donald answered.

"Really, I do not care about losing you. Not many fellows are so faithful in small things as you have proven yourself to be," said Mr. Thayer. "Let me see! Can you write?"

"A little," responded Donald, with a grim smile.

"Let me see a sample." returned Mr. Thayer, pushing pen and paper toward him.

Donald wrote a few lines in his rapid, elegant style, while his employer looked on in blank amazement. When he had satisfied himself, he asked, "Where did you learn to write so fluently, my boy?"

"I picked it up by the way," Donald answered, with a sparkle of fun in his dark eyes.

"Did you pick up any ideas about figures as you passed along?" inquired the merchant.

"A few," Donald replied, with an innocent air.

"You understand book-keeping too, I presume," continued Mr. Thayer, a little inclined to be ironical.

"I flatter myself that I do," answered Donald, with a little tremor in his voice.

A prolonged whistle from Mr. Thayer indicated his surprise. "What on earth is there that you can't do? If you were not so boyish-looking I would take you for an absconding bank cashier."

Donald colored and bit his lip with vexation. The words troubled him. He wondered what Mr. Thayer would say if he were to tell him why he left his last place, and how he came to be thrown penniless upon the world.

Noticing the cloud upon the young man's face, the merchant tried to soften the effects of his words by saying:

"Never mind my jesting. I meant no offence, I assure you. We are in need of an assistant-book-keeper, and if old Norris will tolerate your bright eyes and sharp tongue I've a mind to give you a trial. Come along and we will sound him on the subject," he said, as he ushered his protege into the presence of that august personage.

The old book-keeper settled his glasses and scrutinized the newcomer carefully; then, without a word,

he pushed a ledger toward him, and directing him to transfer several pages to another book, he returned to his own work and gave him no further notice.



CHAPTER XI.

PROMOTED.

WHEN Donald was installed assistant book-keeper it was with the understanding that in busy seasons he was to make himself useful in rendering service wherever it was most needed.

Eadie was very much dissatisfied with Mr. Thayer's arrangement, but the position he occupied was subordinate, and altogether dependent upon the whim of his Uncle, who was an important member of the firm. Fearing that Donald might give him trouble, he wisely concluded to treat him a little more courteously, although nothing could have induced him to acknowledge that he had wronged him.

As the store was closed every evening promptly at seven o'clock, Donald had the long evenings to himself. These he spent in close study, scarcely ever leaving his room after entering it, when his day's work was over.

Now that he was comfortably situated, he determined to let no more time pass without entering upon the work he had decided to undertake. He had been a close student all his life, and the last few years of schooling to which he had been subjected had served to make him very self-reliant, as well as persevering. For some time he had kept his eye steadily upon the legal profession, and since his

sojourn in the city, he had heard so much in praise of Judge Gibbons' ability that he determined, if possible, to secure him for an instructor. One evening, when business was duller than usual, he succeeded in obtaining an extra hour in which to consult the renowned Judge. Arranging his toilet with great care, he started forth on his long walk flushed with bright expectations. A pompous waiter answered his ring, and conducted him into the presence of the great man. Looking up from a table covered with legal-looking papers, Mr. Gibbons motioned him to a seat by the glowing wood-fire, and went on with his rapid writing. In the interval that elapsed before he finished, Donald had time to study him unobserved.

His clothes, though of the best material, were poorly fitting, and his dark hair, now plentifully sprinkled with silver, was combed straight back from his broad, intellectual forehead. His features were irregular and strongly marked, the nose being quite prominent—a characteristic not often wanting in decided natures.

Donald was growing somewhat impatient before the lawyer pushed his papers from him, shoved his glasses high up on his forehead, and said, "Well, my lad, what can I do for you to-day?"

The cheery voice and kindly look of the deep-set gray eyes reassured Donald, and in a few well-chosen words he made known his business.

The Judge asked him several questions regarding his attainments and prospects, and then, without one unnecessary word, arranged for his recitations. Immediately he returned to his papers, merely stop-

ping his pen long enough to bid his caller good evening.

"So this is the way he has gained his reputation—making every moment count—and into every minute crowding its own work."

Procuring the necessary books, Donald determined to imitate his example by letting no more precious time run to waste. So, while others were spending their nights in frivolous amusements, he was found burning the midnight oil in order to gain that knowledge for which his soul hungered. Besides the books that yielded him so much pleasure, his sharp experience in the city was teaching him many new lessons. In the store, at the counting-desk, at the table—everywhere he was gathering up material that was going into the grand life he was building for the future.

One day after Donald had shown to inexperienced customers goods which he could not conscientiously recommend, Eadie remarked in a taunting voice:

"I thought your business here was to sell goods—not to depreciate them, sir. I was astonished at your display of the lack of mercantile ingenuity."

"What interpretation do you expect me to put upon your words?" asked Donald.

"Do nothing but answer questions," Eadie explained. "It is not necessary to point out defects in articles under exhibition."

"I cannot vouch for goods that are really useless. If I am to do business for you it must be an honest, upright business," Donald replied.

"If you work for me, sir, you will be obliged to perform that work according to my wishes. I will not permit you to bring your outrageous ideas of

honesty into the labor that I require at your hands," sneered Eadie.

"If you possessed a little of that common honesty that should exist in all business transactions it would be better both for yourself and your customers," returned Donald. "If there is any thing in the world that I despise it is hypocrisy."

"You canting church-goers are the most consummate hypocrites I know," was Eadie's disdainful answer.

"I go to church simply because I promised my mother, when she was dying, that I would do so, and I read my Bible regularly for the same reason," said Donald.

"And you don't believe in either?"

"I believe my mother was good and true, and she believed in the Bible, but you rich folks who have shut the doors of your elegant churches against your poor brethren have almost made an infidel of me."

"How, or in what manner, have our doors been closed against you?" urged Eadie.

"The doors of your pews *have*, at least," answered Donald.

"I think if you had not been so lofty you would have observed that there were plenty of empty seats in the rogues' corner—reserved for just such persons as you. You know birds of a feather are said to flock together."

"Well, that is not the kind of a religion that my mother had, and I like her's best," Donald said in the tender voice that seemed to come naturally when he spoke of his mother.

"It seems to me that very few people enjoy the Christianity they profess now-adays," admitted Eadie.

“Perhaps it is their own fault,” said Donald. “If I pretended to be a Christian I would try to carry it into my every-day life, so as to get some comfort out of it, but while there are two religions—one for the rich and one for the poor—I do not wish to take any stock in it.”

Somehow the conversation had drifted into a different channel from that in which it had begun, and the two young men for once had found a subject upon which they could agree. Reared in Christian homes, they had both drifted far away from the God of their childhood, and it seemed to do them good to talk over the shortcomings of the people of God.



CHAPTER XII.

DICK'S JOURNEY.

WHEN Dick Jewell applied to his Cousin Donald for assistance he really intended to make an effort to mend his life. For two years he had been drifting about without a home—feeding upon husks, and he was tired of such an existence. If he could have succeeded in procuring a job of week, he would not have presented himself at the bank for the purpose of intercepting Donald that morning. The first year after his banishment Aunt Pen had, for the sake of the family name, furnished money to keep him out of the work-house on several occasions, but the last time she had given him aid, she had warned him never to come back to her for help again, and knowing that she was a woman of her word, he had not ventured to appeal to her since. A few times Christine had given him a portion of her small allowance, but oftener the money that bought his bread and butter came directly from Donald's pocket. Dick claimed to be a gentleman and altogether above work, but when in absolute want he usually managed to obtain some little job by which he earned enough to keep soul and body together.

As I have said, he was in earnest this wintry morning, and in spite of Aunt Pen's warning would

have had the impudence to venture into her presence and plead his case had not Donald assured him that his visit would be worse than useless. In stating his case to his Cousin, he had no expectation of receiving more than sufficient to pay his fare to some neighboring town. It was Donald's own sympathy that prompted him to rig the wanderer out in a respectable suit, and sent him off to a Western town, where he would have some chance of breaking away from his bad associates.

It was not a guilty conscience that sent Dick around the corner so quickly in order to avoid the scrutiny of the two pair of eyes that were watching him from the bank window. The fact was, it had been so long since he had worn decent clothes that he felt a little uncomfortable in his new suit, and wished to get off before people began to question him about his changed appearance. Half an hour later he was *en route* for a prairie city, altogether ignorant of the trouble into which he had innocently plunged his self-sacrificing Cousin.

Some distance beyond Chicago a fierce snow-storm swept down from the lakes, delaying the train and causing some suffering and a great deal of grumbling among the passengers. At last the engine gave out and the train came to a standstill, fortunately, within a few rods of a village. There were but few passengers in the coaches, and most of them preferred their cozy quarters to the disagreeable half-mile's tramp through the snow-drifts to the station.

Dick was thoroughly tired out, and was feeling a little blue, and as soon as he found out that the train was snow-bound determined to make his way to the depot, hoping to find there a warm lunch, and per-

haps something else more stimulating. When he reached his destination the dismal appearance of the place took away his appetite, so instead of hunting up something to eat or drink, he walked into the waiting-room, and with his hat pulled half over his eyes sat down sullenly by the stove. The fire was burning with a dull glow, and what few passengers were scattered around were either asleep or miserably stupid.

"What bad taste that pert-looking miss in brown exhibits," was Dick's inward comment, as his eyes rested upon a fair young girl dressed in a rich silk. "She does not look as though she had a single idea beyond dress," and as he watched the fluttering bit of silk and ribbon opposite him, Dick's speaking face betrayed contempt and conscious superiority. As he turned his eyes in the opposite direction he observed that the restless little creature had attracted the attention of another pair of eyes that seemed to be dissecting her with less mercy than he had shown. This self-appointed critic was a young lady too, and her faultlessly neat and lady-like travelling suit contrasted most favorably with the little blonde's more showy attire. The brunette possessed a pretty face too, and she was not ignorant of her fine appearance either, Dick guessed, as from beneath the brim of his hat he watched her little peeps into the mirror opposite. She could get a full view of herself, and from her satisfied air he knew that she had no criticisms to offer—that in her opinion, at least, every thing, from the dainty veil that fluttered over her hat to the shining tips of her walking boots, was becoming.

At length this very proper young lady settled back in her seat and closed her eyes as if excessively bored

with the stupidity of her fellow-travellers. Two middle-aged ladies, spinsters, occupied the seat next to her, but they were as prim and stiff as herself, and did not shock her ideas of propriety by presuming to address her without first having been regularly introduced.

Besides these there were ten or a dozen other people in the waiting-room, each one, apparently, oblivious of his neighbor's existence. It makes men, yes and women too, selfish to travel, and to miss a train or be obliged to wait an hour or two at a dingy station, with all the avenues of escape blockaded with snow, makes them sullenly selfish, and forgetful of the comforts of others.

A short time after Dick had completed a survey of the inmates of the station an old woman, accompanied by a middle aged man, came hurrying in, as if afraid of missing the train. The ticket-office was closed, and after drumming on the window a time or two without receiving an answer, the man said:—"I reckon I will be obliged to go, mother, and leave you to get your own ticket."

"Yes, David, thee had best get back. The storm is increasin', and thee has a long way to go before dark."

"Well, then, good-by," he said, stretching out his horny hand for a farewell shake. "Take good keer of yourself, and write us a line as soon as you are settled."

"I will, David, and thee must not forget to answer," was the reply.

"I am not much of a scribe, mother, but Elizabeth Ann is a first-rate writer and thinks nothin' of scrib-

bling off a letter," said the man, as he went out into the storm again.

"Poor David! What a disagreeable ride he has before him. I do hope he'll not get bewildered and lose his way," said the old woman, addressing the self-complacent figure in the trim travelling suit.

There was a haughty expression on the young girl's face, but her lips framed no response to the wish of the speaker. The lonely old woman made a few more attempts to draw her silent sisters into conversation, but receiving only monosyllables for answers she went to the ticket-office, and after considerable difficulty succeeded in attracting the attention of the agent.

"I want a ticket, sir," she said, drawing out her old-fashioned knit-purse. "I am going to Morrow, and I do not want the train to go off and leave me."

"There is not much danger of it doing that while it remains snow-bound," was the dry reply.

"I reckon not, but I may as well be ready. Please give me a ticket to go to Morrow."

"To-morrow! What's the use in getting it until the right time?" replied the young man, in a jesting manner. "Never mind the ticket for the present."

"How long will it be till the train is ready to go?" inquired the old woman, watching him keenly.

"How can I tell while the snow comes down so rapidly? I am sure it will not go until an engine comes, and that may be in an hour, or not to night."

"Well, I guess I'll get my ticket, and it will be off my mind," a little nervously.

"You said you were going to-morrow, and that does not come for twenty-four hours," returned the agent, winking slyly at some of the boys in the office.

"Didn't thee tell me that the train might be along in an hour?"

"That's to-day's train, ma'am. To-morrow's wont go till the day comes."

"Then this train don't stop at Morrow? David was sure it did, and now I'll have to stay all night in the station."

While the old woman was speaking there was a little rustle of silk and velvet in the direction of the brown-robed figure. Then with an indignant flash of the blue eyes their owner sprang to her feet and crossed over to the ticket window where the parley was going on.

"Give this lady her ticket at once," she demanded. "Why do you keep her waiting so long?"

"O! she said she was going to-morrow, and what's the use of her buying the bit of paste-board so long before she wants it. Might lose it, you see, miss," retorted the boy, who was not the regular ticket agent.

"You understood her very well, and if you do not wait upon her properly I'll see that you are reported to those whose business it is to look after the comfort of the travelling public."

"I was only in fun, ma'am. I did not mean to be rude," explained the youth, as he handed out the ticket.

"People are generally judged by what they *do* instead of what they mean," was the young girl's reply, as she led her charge to a seat by the fire. "Sit down and warm yourself. You are shivering," she said, as she raked the ashes out of the stove, and sent a bright blaze dancing up the long, rusty pipe.

"There is something besides dress in her head after

all," said Dick to himself, as with an admiring glance he watched the "little idiot's" quick, graceful movements. To be sure he did not know her name, but already he was conscious that the one he had bestowed upon her was inappropriate.

When the dear old woman was made as comfortable as the circumstances of the case would permit, the little bundle of silk and inconsistency stepped out on the slushy platform, and three minutes later the chilly, uncared-for woman was gazing into the depths of a fragrant cup of tea."

"Drink it," urged the young creature by her side. "It will warm you up, and here are some nice warm rolls that will go with it exactly," laying the tempting lunch in her lap.

"Thank thee, thank thee, my dear. I am only a poor, old, ignorant woman and cannot reward thee for thy kindness, but God will not forget about all that thee has done for me."

"Do not speak about this little thing. I have only done for you what I would want some other girl to do for my grandmother were she in such a lonely condition," was the quick response.

"Are you travelling alone, madam?" inquired a gentleman on the opposite side of the stove.

"Yes, sir! You see I have been making my home with my son David since Joseph died, but David's family has grown to be so large that he has no room for me, and I am going to live with my daughter Malinda. Like as not, she wont want to be bothered with me either; then I'll be packed off to John's, or Kate's, or Nancy's for awhile," and the tears rolled down the old woman's cheeks while she told her sad story.

"Such a shame," muttered Dick, half under his breath.

"Indeed, it is," said the gentleman, "They ought rather to be quarrelling about who could give you the warmest corner."

"Thee sees things are different now. One mother can take care of half a dozen boys and girls when they are little, but they all think it a hardship to have her to look after when she is old."

"It's too much the case, I know, but that don't make it right, and those children who try to shift the responsibilities of aged parents unto the shoulders of strangers will surely miss a blessing," was the gentleman's response.



CHAPTER XIII.

AN INCIDENT AND ITS SEQUEL.

JUST at that moment the door was pushed open, and a young-looking man came in. With a bow and a smile, he crossed over to the other side of the room and put some papers and tracts in the racks that had been placed there for that purpose. Then turning to the agent he explained, lightly:

"Mother could not get out this cold afternoon, so she delegated me to bring some spiritual nourishment to the hungry sinners who might stand in need of it."

"All right, Jack," laughed the agent, "but if this storm keeps increasing, I imagine these snow-bound pilgrims will stand in need of something more substantial before they get their breakfast."

"Very well! I have fulfilled my part of the contract," replied the young man. "No, I have not, either," he corrected, "for mother charged me to tack one of those tracts to the wall. This is it," he continued, taking a one-page leaflet from the wall-pocket, and securing it in a conspicuous place. "There!" he exclaimed, returning the tack-hammer to his basket. "That is a nice little tract. Perhaps, while you are waiting you can read it, and some of the good papers over there as well," with a nod in the direction of the paper rack.

"What a queer idea," thought Dick, as he watched the bright face pass out into the storm again. "What does he care for tracts? Some kind ladies have sent them the supply no doubt."

"I'd like dreadful well to hear it," an old gentleman said, nodding his gray head in the direction of the fluttering tract, "but I've packed up my specs and might just as well have left my eyes behind as far as readin' goes. You don't look as if you'd need glasses for awhile, my dear," he added, glancing towards the self-complacent young lady in the corner.

An impatient shrug of the shoulder was all the answer he received, though under her breath she really did mutter, "Hateful old man! If you want it read unpack your specs and use them yourself."

After a few minutes' silence the little maiden whom Dick had denominated brainless, a mere butterfly of fashion, came to the rescue by saying in a low, sweet voice, "If you would really like to hear it, sir, I will read it for you."

"I'd be mighty glad to hear it, if it is not askin' too much. I'm tired out, havin' travelled over three hundred miles this week, and a bit o' good readin' would 'rest me wonderfully," and the wrinkled, homely face lighted up with a glad smile as it was turned toward the dainty rosebud of a maiden.

With an added flush in her cheeks, the young girl crossed over to where the tract was hung, and in the stillness that settled over the listeners, she read in a clear voice:

"Dear Friend:—In Jesus' name I come to you with a very important question, and 'In His Name' I hope you will answer it truthfully. Are you a Christian? If you are, what have you done for him

to-day? Has any one been any happier or better for your having lived to-day? In His Name have you been doing wee bits of work by the wayside? Have you lived Christ to-day—lived so as to recommend him to those who know him not? If death should come to you to-night, are you ready to appear in his presence? What would your record be if called to give in your account before the morrow's sun should rise? In His Name look out for opportunities to help your brothers and sisters, who are struggling and toiling along their journey heavenward. What have you done for Jesus to-day? What are you doing now?

"If you are not a Christian, then the question is still more weighty and the answer more important. Listen, while I repeat it once more. Are you a Christian? If not, why? When will you be? Shall it be the next week, or the next month, or the next year, or will it be at some date away in the future too remote to be set just at present? Ah, my dear friend, delays are dangerous, and for you there may be no to-morrow—for you it may be written, Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee.

"Just now is all the time that God has given you, and just now is the only sure time you will have to prepare for death. Another hour and it may be too late. Come to Jesus—*now*.

"Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

As the young reader returned to her seat with the color on her cheeks deepened into a warm crimson the old gentleman said:

"Thank you, my dear. No matter what the rest

of us have been doin', you have been pickin' up 'wee bits' of work by the wayside."

"It is very little, so very little that I can do for Him," replied the young girl, in a quivering voice.

"God looks on it in a very different light, my dear child," said the old friend she had comforted a short time previous. "Don't thee mind that it was him who said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me?'"

"And I am one of the very least of these little ones," the answer came in a very weak, but distinct, voice.

"And you have showed kindness unto other weak, little ones," responded the old man, as he drew his coarse sleeve across his wet eyes.

It was at this moment that the very proper young lady laid aside her dignity so far as to cross the long room and really grasp that "ridiculous" mite of flesh and blood by the hand. By way of explanation, she pointed to the little Maltese cross and purple ribbon on her breast, saying:—"You see we are sisters, and I think—yes, I pride myself, that at a single guess, I could name the circle of 'The King's Daughters' to which you belong."

"Perhaps you can—at least, I would not be surprised if you would hit it exactly; but I am very poor at guessing and would never chance upon the name of the Ten you represent," returned the owner of the sweet voice, with a silvery laugh.

"I do not pretend to be a good guesser; but from your actions here to-day I would say at once that you belong to the 'Ministering Ten.' You know—That by their fruits ye shall know them.'"

"Then the fruit that I am bearing must be misleading, for I am a member of the 'Home-making Ten.' You see my two older sisters belong to more important branches of the league, but as I am not out of school yet, we all thought that it would be better for me to just take up the little duties that lie around home. So all that I am obliged to do is to try to make the home-people happy and contented."

"A pretty big undertaking, I should say, if they are all as thoroughly human as most households. I belong to the 'Singing Ten,' and if I am a judge my position is less difficult to fill than yours. The little deeds of love that you have been performing so patiently here to-day led me to suppose that you were one of the 'Ministering Ten,' and that you were carrying out the works of the sisterhood by doing whatever your hands find to do."

"That is the spirit I would like to carry into everyday life, but I am afraid I do not 'lend a hand' half as often as I might, seeing I am one of the 'King's Daughters.'"

"I suppose that we should all be on the lookout for chances to work 'In His Name,' but I am free to confess that I have been altogether absorbed in the duties belonging to my own 'Ten.' We have given quite a number of parlor concerts for the benefit of charitable institutions, and on several occasions we have furnished the music for the prison-service in connection with the city mission."

"It must be a delightful experience to give so much pleasure to others, but while I am a school-girl I must be content to fill the narrow sphere allotted to me."

"I wonder which of the two contributes the more

largely to the pleasure of the people with whom they come in contact," mused Dick with furtive glances at the two pretty faces so bright and earnest, yet so very different. "A woman with a sweet voice may accomplish wonders, but sweet ways and a hand always ready to help over hard places, be they ever so trifling, will bring rest and peace when the notes of the sweet singer would jar discordantly upon the troubled ear."

Dick might have kept up his comparison much longer had not the agent looked in to say that the engine had arrived at last, and that the train would be ready to start in ten minutes.



CHAPTER XIV.

AN ACCIDENT..

AT FIRST the train ran heavily, and the snow-shovels were kept in constant play, but a few miles west of the point where the engine had given out the storm had been less severe, and better speed was made. Most of the travellers were through passengers, and as soon as night came on wrapped themselves up as comfortably as possible, and in spite of the howling storm without tried to forget their disappointment in sleep.

A fretful baby near the front kept a fidgety old man in goggles in constant search of new epithets by which to designate his horror of babies in general, and this one in particular, while two young ladies, across the aisle from Dick, occasionally stopped their flow of small-talk long enough to fling invectives alternately at the fussy old man and the baby's poor, tired mother.

Dick's vagrancy had not destroyed his keen sympathy for others, and pity for the unfortunate child set him to rummaging in his pockets for something to amuse the feverish little thing. The large, sweet orange which he produced proved very grateful to the little one's hot gums; and much to the comfort of the weary mother, as well as that of the grumbling old man and inconsiderate young ladies, the troublesome little fellow was soon fast asleep.

After finding her old lady a comfortable seat, the bright little being who belonged only to the "Home-making Ten" shook out her skirts and took a seat directly in front of her charge.

"Please, can I sit down by your side for awhile?" asked the member of the "Singing Ten." "I would like to have a congenial companion during the balance of the journey, and as we are ticketed for the same point we might as well keep together."

Dick laughed—a little mocking laugh—all to himself, of course. He hated shams, and this self-possessed young lady's sudden appreciation of the girl she had criticised so freely an hour previous angered him. He was aware that he had been guilty of the same unkindness, but he was not a woman, neither was he fussy over the pretty bit of flesh and blood that in spite of her oddities interested him more than he would like to have acknowledged.

An hour later nearly all the passengers in the coach had yielded to drowsiness, and for several hours, while the train plunged along over the prairies, they slept as securely as if they were not already within the shadow of a great calamity. Just before the train rushed headlong into the death-trap awaiting it, a very pathetic incident occurred in the rear car, where our acquaintances of the station were quietly sitting. It was a very sad as well as striking episode, and one that made a life-long impression on poor Dick Jewell. It began about midnight with the entrance of a bridal party composed of bride and groom and two couple of their gay attendants. In order that the party might sit together Dick gave up his seat to the young man and his bride. As it was afterwards shown, this courtesy saved his life, for the

young couple were both killed. These gay people were concert singers, and seemed as jolly and full of fun as if the north wind were not whistling dismally through every crack and crevice of the train. They sang, and laughed, and told stories, and anticipated the pleasure of the trip until quite late. About the time they were settling down for an hour's nap one of the gentlemen requested the young bride to sing "Sweet Hour of Prayer." Something in the desire to sleep and rest recalled the sweet old song. The young woman sung and all listened while the train sped on. As the little gleam of fiendish fire that was to end the song appeared far down the track their voices swelled in:

"Yet in my dreams I'd be
Nearer, my God, to thee."

The speed of the train increased down the grade, and other voices joined in the familiar hymn, as again full and clear the song rolled forth:

"There let the way appear,
Steps into heaven."

The way was already in sight, but had they known it the next refrain would not have been sung with so much spirit:

"All that thou sendest me,
In mercy given."

And then with but a moment of life left for each, even when poor Ed Marling's hand was giving its last desperate wrench to the throttle of his engine the singers sang to their God, who seemed not to be holding them in the hollow of his hand:

"Angels to beckon me,
Nearer, my God, to thee."

Enough! The song was finished, and with it ended the lives of the singers. The engine struck the frail bridge, with its burning supports, and with it went down into the narrow channel. The car containing the bridal party crashed like a bolt of Jove through the two cars in front of it, killing and grinding as a foot tramples a worm. In the same instant another car crashed through it, and the singers, with many others, were numbered with the dead. Perhaps, the song began on earth was finished when passing through the valley of shadows. Who can tell but that each of those sweet singers could in death sing:

“Or if, on joyful wings
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon and stars forget,
Upward I fly,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee?”

For a moment after the deadening crash all was still; then the piercing screams of the wounded and dying passengers filled the air.

A kind hand lifted a heavy plank that had pinned Dick to the floor, and without further help he managed to crawl out of the window near him. Turning immediately to render needed aid to others, he was reminded by a sharp pain in the arm that he had not escaped altogether. Carrying his broken member by his side, he did much good service among the sufferers.

The fussy old man was crushed so as to be almost unrecognizable, while the peevish little baby lay white and limp on the frozen ground, and the poor mother's arms would in all the long future ache only with their own emptiness. The two young ladies dropped tears

of pity over the lone mother's woe, but it was Dick, wild Dick Jewell, who spoke such tender words of sympathy in her ear.

"Will not some one help us?" came in clear, distinct words from the rear end of the car, from which Dick had just been released.

Dick knew that voice—it had been ringing in his ears ever since those awful questions had been propounded. He had not thought of answering them then, but now he could say, "I am not a Christian, but since I have been standing face to face with death I want to be."

Soon brave men had liberated the owner of that voice, and those imprisoned with her. She was injured about the shoulders slightly, and the young lady who occupied the seat with her was suffering with a crushed foot. The old man for whom she had read the tract escaped without a scratch, while the dear old woman, who was on the way to her daughter's, had ended her journey. Her children would never have occasion to quarrel over her again—for she had found rest-eternal in the heavens.

"Why do you work altogether with your left arm?" asked the blue-eyed, brown-robed girl after watching Dick's heroic efforts at assistance.

"I sustained some injury while we were cramped up in that uncomfortable jam, and unfortunately my best arm is crippled," he replied.

"Then you should not risk so much in your efforts to assist others," she answered.

An hour later Dick came back to the little girl who had succeeded in interesting him, and as they stood and gazed upon the mournful scene, looking from the white upturned faces among the snow to

the bright stars that now twinkled so coldly in their far-away home, he said, with a strange thrill in his voice, "This sight reminds me forcibly of the God who mocks at the creatures his own hands formed."

As the young girl turned a startled face towards him, he added, bitterly, "It seems strange to me a God of love and mercy, presiding over the destinies of all, and yet among those icy sleepers are numbered the innocent babe and the little child who had not learned the ways of sin. How can the all-pitying One witness such heart-rending desolation, and not put forth his hand to avert it?"

"I cannot understand it, for his ways are unsearchable and past finding out," the young girl repeated, more to herself than in reply to his question.

"They must be, or, at least, they are, very different from what we would call merciful."

"What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter," said a faint voice from among the fatally wounded. They both drew nearer the sufferer, and kneeling down by the side of the dying, the trembling girl wiped the death-damp from the marble brow of the woman, not much older than herself. "If you could only feel the power of Jesus' love, as I do now, you would never doubt him again. I know I am dying, but I am not afraid, for He is near me, and his rod and staff comfort me."

The woman's breath was coming quicker and shorter, and Dick, unused to such scenes, hurried away in search of a physician, but before he returned with help the young saint had entered within the veil.

"What shall I call you—Mr.—Mr.?" asked the young lady, as they turned to the fire that had been started in the old mill near by.

"Call me Dick Jewell, and do tell me by what name to address you, for I have been distinguishing you by the color of your dress ever since I first saw you."

"It is a wonderful time since we first met in that little dingy station, but you have been so kind to me that I do not mind telling you that I am Bessie Kent, and this young lady informs me that at home she is known by the name of Mabel Drayton."

Bowing to the trim miss who had excited his disgust by her patronizing airs, Dick inquired if there was any thing more that he could do for their comfort, and being informed to the contrary, he went out to see what help he could afford outside.

Day was breaking before the wounded, the dying and the dead were transferred to a train waiting to carry them to a place where proper attention could be given them. Slowly they crawled along over the frozen rails, and in another hour reached a resting where the wounded were cared for by competent nurses and the dead were prepared for burial.



CHAPTER XV.

A MODEL HOME.

DICK'S broken arm proved quite troublesome before he was able to use it again. During the excitement following the accident it had seemed of such small consequence, when compared with the terrible suffering of others, that he almost lost sight of the injury altogether. When at last, after the removal, a physician had time to examine into the extent of the injury, the arm was found to be badly swollen, making the reduction of the fracture both difficult and painful. Fever followed, and for several days he was unable to leave the hospital to which he had been carried.

Not being informed as to the nature of his daughter's injuries, Dr. Kent came to the scene of the disaster upon the first train that left Springfield. Though he was gratified to find Bessie's injuries slight, the great need of skilled help among the wounded induced him to spend several days in giving such assistance as the sufferers required.

Having learned from Bessie that Dick's condition was much aggravated by his heroic efforts to serve others whose misfortunes were greater than his own, the kind-hearted Doctor insisted upon the friendless youth making his home a stopping-place until he should be able to look out for himself. Though heretofore Dick had not been very sensitive about

living off others, his pride revolted against accepting such an invitation when he was convinced that it had been given out of sheer pity.

Judging that the youth's refusal had its foundation in a false pride, the doctor offered to give him employment when he was able to go to work, with the privilege of repaying the debt should his conscience still continue to trouble him on that score.

The house to which Dr. Kent took his guest was large and handsome. Grand, almost, one might have been tempted to say, only that in all its appointments it displayed a taste too exquisite to be denominated grandeur.

"This is my sister Helen," said Bessie brightly, presenting a slight, delicately formed lady, with brown hair and hazel eyes.

"And here, Helen, is a very tired, cold and weary young gentleman, whom I commend to your brightest sunshine," said the doctor briskly, after placing his patient in an easy chair by the side of the glowing fire. Helen laughed a low, silverly little laugh as she shook the snow-flakes from the young man's hat.

Dick sank back in the depths of the great easy chair, and wondered if he really were awake, or if this vision of beauty and sensation of rest and luxury were merely fanciful illusions. Dick had an eye for beauty, but it was the admirable fitness of things, the blending of colors and shades, the matching of every thing, without seeming to be matched, just as things match in the woods on an October day, when the sunlight glints the rich-hued leaves with yellow and gold.

The carpet was thick, and soft, and bright, with sprays of geranium leaves strewn here and there as if

a graceful hand had scattered them there, fresh and fragrant from the most rare plant.

There was a bay-window filled with exotic plants, and song birds in their gilded cages chirped and twitted pleasantly in the merry sunshine.

An old English ivy crept out from behind the mirror, and wound gracefully around statues, and trailed over mantles at its own sweet will.

There was furniture in the room, dainty and exquisite chairs and tables and sofas, but these all seemed to hold a subordinate place, doing their duty gracefully and well, but by no means ambitious to fill spheres that did not belong to them.

The walls were hung with paper of that creamy tint that gives one the fancy that there is a golden sunset outside, and that somehow the rays have left a glow on every thing inside.

At the supper table Dick first met the gentle mother and the eldest sister, Gladys. Mrs. Kent was as lovely as her daughters, and received the invalid in a very motherly way, which went to his heart at once. His mother had died while he was a very little child, but he had a faint recollection of her fair face and gentle manners, that were not at all like Aunt Pen's. Since she had gone to heaven he had not known any other home than the one from which he had been driven two years before, and it made him homesick to sit with this Christian family and note the love for each other beaming in their eyes.

"If my mother had lived to make such a home for me I would not to-day be 'vagrant Dick Jewell,'" was the young man's soliloquy, as he lay, with half-closed eyes, upon the parlor sofa. "It is bad homes that make prisons and reformatories necessary," he

mused bitterly. "And is it the will of these Christian people's God that homes be broken up and children left to grow into manhood and womanhood without the sheltering care of a mother's love?"

"What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter," came back to him, and again he saw the light in that dying woman's eye, and again he wondered if there could be such a transforming influence in religion. Aunt Pen went to church regularly every Sunday and was never known to miss communion; she believed in the creed and read her Bible occasionally, but she enjoyed none of the softening effects of the blessed gospel, neither did she recommend its teaching by her life, and the question that troubled poor Dick as he lay there tossing feverishly from side to side was, Why this difference? Why is she not like Mrs. Kent, and why does she not show religion by bearing Christian fruits?



CHAPTER XVI.

A SURPRISE.

DICK'S convalescence was tedious. Somehow, in spite of his determination to make rapid improvement, he gained strength very slowly. The Doctor gave him the best of attention, and looked disappointed at the unsatisfactory results of his experiments. There was no hereditary taint in his blood, Dick affirmed, for the boy did not know that the wine-drinking of his forefathers was steadily undermining the constitutions of the whole Bergh race. These ancestors had not been heavy drinkers, but they had bequeathed to their descendants a taste for intoxicants as well as a weakness that was not able to resist temptation when it came. The Doctor surmised the difficulty and cautiously questioned him concerning the habits of his ancestry. Dick admitted that they had been high-livers, neither did he attempt to conceal the fact that of late years he had been living rather a dissipated life. He was surprised that the Doctor took his statement so coolly, but many surprises and revelations, too, came to him while he lay in that luxurious room enjoying the splendid misery of invalidism.

One of these surprises came rather suddenly upon him one morning when he learned that there was a son and brother in that home. Not a bright, upright,

manly youth, a son to be proud of and a brother to be a fitting companion of the lovely sisters, but a dissolute, erring prodigal like himself. How any one could have gone so far astray within the peaceful influence of that charming home was a mystery to the poor fellow who had never known the blessing of such surroundings. Though from the father's stern visage in the presence of his boy, Dick knew that he carried a heavy heart, there were never unpleasant scenes and bitter recriminations on occasions of the son's shortcomings, as there used to be in the old home when Aunt Pen heard of his own evil-doings.

As he lay there watching Bessie as she flitted about from duty to duty like a bird from flower to flower, he thought that by nature she was a true homemaker. He had not understood the meaning of the Maltese cross or the mysterious "Ten," about which the two girls had been talking that day in the station, but of one thing he was convinced, there was a significance in the name of the "Ten" to which she belonged.

Though Louis, the recreant son, was usually sullen and disagreeable, he scarcely ever answered this bright young sister roughly, and her influence over him was one of the blessings for which the parents gave thanks daily. She never made a display of this power—it was by subtle, silent work that the leading was done—the seeming not to lead was the secret of her success.

One evening Bessie was sitting by the fire puzzling her brain over a difficult problem in algebra. Once or twice she glanced up at her father, who occupied a seat opposite her, but he appeared to be engaged

with his paper, and his leisure moments were so few that she disliked to trouble him with her trivial difficulties. Presently Louis came shuffling down stairs and crossed the hall to the door.

"Now he is off to Linton's," mused Bessie. "I do wish—" a bright idea struck her, and she called pleasantly, "Louis, have you any particular engagement to meet just now?"

She saw that her words had not been well-chosen even before Louis replied, defiantly:—"About as much engaged as vagabonds usually are."

"I wish you would lend me your head for a short time; I am at my wits' end. Here I have been working at this question for a full hour, and I am no nearer the end than I was at first."

Louis looked at her suspiciously. He was not certain whether she really wished help or was setting a trap to catch him up.

"You don't suppose a worthless fellow like me could be of any service to you?" he muttered at last, taking a step towards her.

"Try me and see," was her reply. "I know you are familiar with every example in this book."

She made room for him by her side, and he was soon as much interested in the problem as she had been in devising means to detain him. One difficulty after another was talked over until Bessie dared not detain him longer for fear he would detect her design. However, he made no movement in the direction of Linton's, and when he did go it was to his own room.

The grateful look Bessie received from her father more than repaid her for an evening's pleasure she had missed. An hour later, when passing Louis' half-

open door, she was agreeably surprised to see him deeply engrossed with some of his old school books. For several evenings after this she managed to keep him employed. Now it was a knotty geometrical problem, or a difficult Latin translation; again it was a quiet game of chess, where a player was needed, or a new song with broken time that could not be sung without a good, strong bass.

Dick, from his easy chair in the corner, was almost as much interested in the result of the young girl's labor of love as she was herself. Louis seemed so utterly out of place among the refined, cultured members of this family that even the profligate, Dick Jewell, longed to see him reclaimed.

I have said that no disgusting scenes ever marred the harmony of the Kent household even under the most provoking circumstances, and I repeat it, but in their manner of dealing with the erring member there was a vast difference. While the father was stern and cold, the mother was gentle and tender—Gladys ignored the presence of the boy altogether, and Helen tried to coax and reason him back to his old manner of life, for there had been a time when no lad in all the city ranked higher in the estimation of the people than just Louis Kent, and the time was not far past when Dr. Kent's boy had stood at the head of his classes, both in the academy and college.

One morning towards spring, after Dick had ceased to be an invalid, and had taken up the cares incident to the life of a clerk, Louis came in looking very angry, and holding up two square envelopes, asked:

"What does this mean? One of these concerns is addressed to you, Bessie, and the other one has my name written upon it."

"I am sure I cannot tell. Perhaps the quickest way to determine would be to break the seal and examine its contents," replied Bessie, taking the perfumed card from its dainty enclosure. It was an invitation to Nettie Garde's birthday party. With an effort to conceal her astonishment, she turned to Louis, who was tearing open his invitation. He glanced over it suspiciously, his face growing dark as he read the contents; then flinging it across the room, he looked at his frightened sister, and said, savagely:—"This is some of your doings, Bessie. Did you mean to insult me?"

"Indeed, Louis, it is the very first intimation I have had that Nettie's birthday was anyways near at hand," returned Bessie.

"You have been trying to interest that saint Philip in my behalf then. The cur never sent this uninfluenced. Of that I am sure," continued Louis, hotly.

"Indeed, Louis, I assure you upon my honor that your name was never mentioned between Phil and myself; besides you have overlooked the fact that this party is Nettie's and not Phil's," Bessie rejoined with a touch of dignity.

Louis' suspicious nature had made him a keen reader of faces, and he turned away fully conscious of the fact that Bessie had told him the exact truth. It required all of Bessie's coaxing and Phil's logic to convince him that he would not be out of place among those who had once been his friends.

"It is a foolish experiment," said Helen, when she heard Bessie's delighted version of the story. "I am afraid it will end disastrously for poor Louis."

And her words proved to be too true. The cordial greetings of Phil and Nettie secured for him polite

treatment from most of their guests, and all would have been well had not Louis, very unfortunately, overheard the remarks of two young ladies who happened to be near him.

"What in the world brought that bar-room loafer, Louis Kent, here to-night?" questioned Dell Norton. "He belongs down at Linton's, and ought to be there instead of here mingling with respectable people."

"It's some of Phil's religion working off. It is a wonder that he did not persuade old Sam Linton to come, too. He seems to think he is able to evangelize the world," laughed the silvery voice of Ava Mitchel.

"Mary Carter calls Phil Mr. Sanbord's curate. You know the boy prays and exhorts at the young people's meeting with as much earnestness as Deacon Thorp himself," Dell returned; "but I do think he might have saved his sister's guests from contact with bar-room rubbish."

"Hush!" whispered Ava. "I heard Phil threaten to thrash Fred Geyer if he dared insult his *protege*. Fred had been indulging in some pretty plain talk."

"It is a shame—"

Louis lost the close of Dell's remarks, for the girls moved away just then. However, the cruel words had done their work. His face was livid with rage, and between his clenched teeth he muttered:—"And so it was Phil, after all!"

Bessie saw him take his hat from the rack, and followed him to the door, pleading for him to wait a moment for her. But he pushed her back savagely, saying:—"I do not want your company, Bessie. I've been insulted, and I'll settle with Phil at some future time."

Phil proposed following him and trying to induce

him to return, but Bessie objected, for there was murder in Louis' flashing eyes when he spoke of Phil.

Knowing that no good would come of dogging his steps, Bessie returned to the parlor, but as soon as she had a chance of speaking to Dick, she asked to be taken home. Louis did not go near Linton's, as Bessie had feared, but after walking aimlessly around for an hour, he went to his own room, and in its solitude recalled the stinging words that had so stirred and embittered his soul. He could not help acknowledging their truth, but they were hard to bear just the same. What was he but a degraded bar-room loafer? Why should he feel so bitterly toward Phil Garde, who really wished to befriend him?

Bessie heaved a sigh of relief as she passed his door, which stood ajar. His ashen face and dejected attitude touched her heart. but she dared not intrude for fear of rousing his anger. It was a long time before she fell asleep, and when she awoke in the morning poor, humbled Louis was gone. Where, no one could tell.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOST FOUND.

ALMOST a year had passed away and still Dick had remained faithful to his trust, while no word had ever come back from poor Louis Kent.

It was the last evening of the Week of Prayer, and the old gray-haired pastor leaned heavily upon the pulpit, waiting for some one to speak a word for Jesus. For seven days and nights he had pleaded with sinners to come to the Saviour, and now must he close these meetings without a single soul being born into the kingdom?

As he looked over the large audience, he asked for the third time, "Is there not a soul in this house ready to testify for the Master? Is there not a father or mother present who desires the salvation of a wayward child? Are there not sisters before me who have brothers unsaved? O, my friends, is there not one anxious heart in all this congregation to-night?"

As he gazed compassionately down on the people he loved many heads were bowed to conceal the emotion they could not otherwise conceal. In the Kent pew Helen moved uneasily from side to side, wishing that she had the courage to ask prayer on behalf of her twin brother—a wanderer from his father's house on earth. Why did not some one

speaking? And then the same old thought came back to perplex her: Why did not she testify for her King? Had he not died for her, and was the cross heavier for her than for others? Then she began debating with herself the propriety of women speaking in public, but before she had settled the question it was settled for her by a familiar voice saying:

"I wish to testify what good things the Lord has done for me. Like the prodigal son, I had wandered far from my Father's house, but in his love and pity he sought me out and brought me back into the fold. I was lost, but now am found."

"Praise the Lord!" exclaimed the old minister, wiping the tears from his faded eyes.

Helen knew that the voice which had broken the painful silence belonged to Louis, but she dared not raise her eyes for fear she might discover that she had been mistaken. Bessie was sitting by her side, and almost immediately began to sing:

"I gave my life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be
And quickened from the dead.
I gave, I gave my life for me,
What hast thou given for me?"

The first few words Bessie sang alone, but before the verse was finished hundreds of voices had joined in the solemn service.

"I have found him very precious to my soul," said Phil Garde, "and I wish to say to the dear brother who has spoken, 'You will never regret the decision you have just now made.' There is no Friend like Jesus. I could not live without Him."

Just at that critical moment Helen caught Dick

Jewell's eye. He was watching her, and perhaps weighing her in the balance. For an instant she turned deathly pale, and then, as if urged on by some invisible influence, she rose to her feet, and in a voice trembling with emotion said, "Jesus is all and in all to me. Pray that I may never disgrace His name."

Immediately every head was bowed, and in tremulous tones Dr. Rea besought the throne of grace. Helen's courageous voice unsealed other lips, and in the blissful hour that followed many for the first time spoke a word for the Master.

Louis Kent had elbowed his way up to the family pew and stood waiting for the meeting to close, when on the opposite side of the aisle a manly form stood up, and in a voice full of suppressed emotion humbly asked, "Will you pray for me, the vilest of sinners?"

Dick Jewell's broken accents sent a strange thrill through the audience, and for a few moments perfect silence reigned; then a tremulous voice, far back in the crowd, said, "Let us pray." Every head was bowed, and when the petition was ended more eyes than those of Dick Jewell were dim with tears.

There seemed to be a peculiar solemnity about Dick's appeal, and after a verse of the hymn,

"Just as I am without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O, Lamb of God, I come, I come,"

there was a brief season devoted to voluntary prayer. Another hymn followed, and then Dr. Rea astonished the congregation by asking Louis Kent to lead in prayer.

There was a sudden rustling of heads, that peculiar murmur of sound that flows over an amazed audience, and then that equally peculiar silence settling over the worshippers as the new voice filled the house with prayer. It was a wonderful prayer. There was such a sense of security in his words, such a realization of the presence of his Saviour.

After that there was some talking, more singing and another prayer, and then Dr. Rea spoke again:

"There may be those present to-night, Christians by profession, who enjoy little of that peace which the young brother, in the mercy of God, so richly inherits. They may be conscious of having followed Jesus afar-off, of having lived unworthy lives; they may be saying at this very moment, 'O, for a closer walk with God.' Perhaps such an one desires our prayers—prayers for a renewal of covenant vows, a reconsecration of heart, and life, and love, and will, and self to the Master. If such persons are present I hope they will manifest their desire by rising."

The request brought many of the vast assembly to their feet; then there were prayers offered, earnest, pleading ones, such prayers as had never before been offered or heard in that place. Tears rolled down wrinkled cheeks, and all over the house suppressed sobs shook strong frames unused to weeping. Christians seemed to have a new baptism of the Spirit, and from the eyes of unconverted church members the scales of unbelief appeared to fall away.

"You were the means of my coming to a decision to-night," said Dick, as he walked home by Helen's side.

"*I was?* How is that possible? What have I ever said or done that could have helped you?"

"Nothing," answered straightforward Dick. "At least nothing until to-night. I never quite believed in you before; but when you arose I felt that there was a hidden power in it all that I did not understand, and I wanted it."

"Then I am glad that God told me to rise, for I feel it was Him, and I did desire to do right, so as not to be a stumbling block to you."



CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRANGE MEETING.

MR. GIBBONS was quick to discern real worth, and remembering his own struggles in early life was ready to offer a helping hand to worthy young men who were striving to make a name and a place in the world. Donald's extra exertions pleased him, and he frequently invited him to spend an hour in his office. One evening he introduced him to his son Leroy. The young man bowed haughtily, but took no further notice of the intruder. On several occasions afterwards he occupied a seat at the table, but never seemed to recognize the young stranger in whose welfare his father took such a deep interest.

In another and less aristocratic part of the city stood Dr. Elton's beautiful home. Though not as palatial as that of Judge Gibbons', elegant simplicity and refined taste had made it a charming spot.

The two men had been life-long friends, and between their families there existed the closest intimacy. Dr. Elton had no children of his own, but his home was frequently brightened by the merry voices of his nephews and nieces. The old Doctor and his wife were fond of all the young people who visited them, but perhaps the face that brought the most sunshine to the home was that of Bessie Kent, the fair, young daughter of Dr. Elton's youngest sister.

During one of her protracted visits she met Leroy Gibbons, and having known him from his infancy, the old Doctor and his wife encouraged rather than discouraged the growing intimacy between the young people. Had they been aware that in the whirl of fashionable life Leroy had learned to love the wine cup, they would have shielded her from his presence as from a deadly viper.

It was no matter of anxiety to them when they saw the young couple depart to spend the evening with a few mutual friends. Leroy had been making calls during the afternoon, and had imbibed too freely already; hence, after partaking of the bountiful repast provided by their hostess, in which old wine was served with a generous hand, he lost control of himself, and for the first time in public drank to excess. Bessie's quick ear noted the unpleasant change in his voice, but until a friend advised her to try to coax him home she was entirely ignorant of the cause of his boisterous conduct.

"Had I not better see you home?" asked young Ferguson, aside, as Bessie prepared to go.

"Thanks! but I will reach home in safety," replied the girl, indignantly.

"After making him drunk kick him out like a dog," she said to herself, as she reluctantly took the arm Leroy offered. She hoped the keen, bracing air would sober him, but it took all her strength to keep him from falling upon the slippery pavement, while his maudlin talk became louder and more disgusting every minute.

"Come on, Leroy, quickly," she begged, ready to cry with vexation.

"I'll be confounded if I do. No gentleman would

be beaten by a plaguey old street, and I'll be hanged if I move a step till the icy pavement goes on."

At last, by a good deal of coaxing and considerable scolding, she succeeded in persuading him to move on for a short distance. Staggering from side to side, sometimes on the street and sometimes on the pavement, she half dragged him along until he fell to hugging and kissing a lamp-post, and no amount of pleading could induce him to move on a step further. Pity, disgust and mortification held sway in Bessie's breast. She was tempted to fly and leave him to his fate, but it was intensely cold and she feared he would freeze before morning. If she called the police he would be locked up, and her name, as well as his, would be bandied before a police court in the morning. What must she do?

Just then she heard footsteps in the distance. At first they brought a feeling of relief, for help was badly needed; then there came to her an overwhelming sense of approaching evil. A knowledge of her own unprotected condition thrilled her with horror. Even should the swift feet be those of a friend how she shrank from making herself known. In the cold chill that shook her frame she could feel the hot blood dyeing her cheeks.

Nearer and nearer came the steps, and in the bright light of the full moon she could see that it was a stranger. Instinctively she drew nearer the man she was trying to protect, hoping that the newcomer would not see them in the shadow of the lamp post where they stood.

It was almost as light as day, but the mutterings of the intoxicated man at her side would have attracted attention even in the dark.

The footsteps slackened, then halted, and a clear voice said, "Can I be of any service to you, ma'am?"

There was something in the tone that gave her confidence, and she answered with a question:

"Would you be so kind as to assist this young gentleman home?" There was a slight tremor in her voice, but she kept up bravely while she listened anxiously for the stranger's reply.

"Where shall I take him?" he asked quietly, taking a step nearer them.

"No. 52 Fifth avenue," Bessie answered, in a more steady voice.

The young man started and looked keenly into the face of the lamp post's companion.

"Do you know him?" Bessie asked, anxiously.

"I think I have met him," he replied, in a hesitating voice. "He is the son of my instructor, Judge Gibbons, if I am not mistaken."

"I regret to say that you are correct," Bessie said huskily, as the young stranger proceeded to loosen the inebriate's grip of the friendly lamp-post and place his arm firmly within his own; then, offering the free one to Bessie, he inquired where she wished to go.

The young girl breathed more freely now, and without being questioned she related as much of the night's experience as was necessary to give him a fair understanding of the unfortunate affair.

Leaving Bessie at her Uncle's door, Donald finally succeeded in reaching the number to which he had been directed. After ringing the bell he was obliged to wait fully ten minutes before the old, gray-headed father opened the door. For a moment the distressed man seemed utterly crushed by the scene before

him, then in a low, troubled voice he said with a groan:

“Please, help to get him to his room.”

Up the broad, carved, oaken stairs they carried their heavy burden, and into an elegantly furnished room, with its canopied bed and rich upholstery, they took their half conscious charge. The unusual sound had waked both Helen and her mother, and they came to the door to inquire into the cause of the disturbance.

Seeing her son lying so white and still, the mother cried out:—“He is dead! O, my boy is dead!”

“Dead drunk!” exclaimed the father, with another groan.

“Unsay those dreadful words!” she shrieked. “I am sure he is dying.”

“Better to die than to disgrace us so,” the father muttered, as he paced back and forth across the room.

Helen went to the window and carefully closed the shutters, her first thought being to hide their shame from the world.

After performing such little ministries as his heart prompted, Donald was about to withdraw, when Helen turned sharply from the window, where she still remained, and said in a cold, hard voice, “See that you keep your lips sealed on what you have witnessed to-night.”

Donald flashed an injured look upon her, and then returned bitterly:

“Do you think I am devoid of all principle as well as feeling?”

“Daughter, I am ashamed of you,” her father exclaimed, reprovingly. “Do not insult this friend

by making such a request. If he had consulted his own comfort he would not have come nearly a mile out of his way to bring your brother home. Had it not been for this young man Leroy would have slept in prison to-night, and to-morrow's papers would have been full of the disgraceful affair."

"Then requite him for his services, and demand his silence," she retorted, with a haughty gesture.

"Faithfulness has its own reward, Helen. Do exercise a little more grace," her father replied.

"Forgive the girl's lack of courtesy," he said, as he offered his hand to Donald at the door. "She is very much excited, and some allowance must be made for her show of spirit."

"Think no more about it," replied Donald, hurrying away.

Helen still kept her place at the window when her father returned. He looked at her gravely as he said:

"I gave you more credit for knowing and keeping your place than you exhibited to-night."

"You can never trust people of his class. They will do any thing for money," she retorted.

"I only wish my own son possessed the sterling qualities of Donald Bergh. With his noble manhood, Leroy would be rich even if he had not a dollar in the world. Money is the greatest curse a young man can inherit when he has not judgment to use it aright. Leroy is much older than Donald Bergh, yet with all the advantages he has enjoyed, young Bergh is much in advance of him as far as education is concerned. I tell you, Helen, the time is coming when you will be proud to recognize that young man you insulted to-night, while your poor, aristocratic brother will never be any thing, unless he changes his course."

"That may all be, father, but because Leroy disgraces himself the rest of us need not get down in the mire with him," insisted Helen. "This Bergh fellow is a nobody. He came to Chicago as a tramp, and began work at Thayer's as a porter."

"Your father earned his first money blacking people's boots," said the Judge, coolly.

"But you don't black boots for a living now," rejoined Helen.

"Neither will Donald Bergh be a porter at fifty-five," said her father. "Brains and aristocracy are not necessarily inseparable. The rich and poor change places once in a generation."

"Still, father, is it necessary for us to anticipate such changes a score of years in advance? Are cultured people obliged to hunt out these scavengers of society and beg for their friendship on the score of what they will be fifty or a hundred years from now?"

"Don't be foolish, Helen. You know I mean nothing of the sort. I only plead that the lowly may have their God-given privileges, and that true worth—not money—open and shut the doors of society. Never again insult any one who has done you a kindness."

"I was provoked into doing what I did, father. It was mean, I'll admit, but I cannot endure for strangers to laugh at our misfortunes," muttered Helen, with a scornful nod in the direction of her brother.

"You seem to have a very poor opinion of human nature, daughter, but your secret is safe with a youth like Donald Bergh," replied her father.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OLD STORY RETOLD.

GERALD EADIE'S years in the city had been prosperous in a worldly point of view. The trickery and unfair dealing that had marked his school life found ample room for play in his business career. An extensive dealer in stocks, he had no scruples as to the means he employed in securing his end. Time and again had he risked the firm's money in doubtful investments, but usually he had made profitable speculations and had been able to replace the borrowed funds before the regular monthly investigation took place. It is probable that he would have been even more reckless, but for the presence of that staunch defender of the right, Donald Bergh, who, much to his annoyance, still filled the responsible position of assistant book-keeper. The affection between the two young men had not increased much during the months that they had spent together in the establishment. It was policy and not principle that compelled Eadie to treat young Bergh with even ordinary courtesy. He was afraid of the honest fellow's sharp eyes, and tolerated his presence simply because he could not get rid of him. The great trouble was the other members of the firm valued the young assistant, not only from a commercial standpoint, where gain and loss alone were to be considered,

but his uniform cheerfulness and courtesy had given him a strong hold upon their hearts.

Every thing in connection with the establishment seemed to be moving along smoothly, and Eadie had almost despaired of dislodging the intruder, when a circumstance occurred that sent a thrill of pleasure through his veins.

It was the second autumn after Donald had been employed by Thayer & Company, and while attending the Exposition at Louisville, that the young merchant met his old chum and room-mate, Will Scott. While discussing their school days at Sterling Academy young Scott referred to the prank that they had so successfully played on old Dr. Armitage. Said he, laughing heartily at the remembrance of his spectacled majesty, the horned sheep, "That was the most ridiculous scene I ever witnessed. It does a fellow good to laugh over it yet."

"The old Doctor didn't enjoy the joke much," answered Eadie, with a frown. He never relished the flavor of that trick himself, and was half provoked at Scott for introducing the subject.

"He did not at the time, but I'll venture he has had many a good laugh over it since," argued Will. "I didn't care a penny for his fussing, but I have a distinct recollection of having felt outrageously uncomfortable when poor Donald Bergh walked down that aisle with his books upon his arm. I felt like getting up and making an out-and-out confession. I stole a glance at you, and you seemed to be the very personification of innocence. You were looking on with the utmost indifference, and I concluded that if you could stand it, I was not going to squeal."

"It was a mean trick, I'll admit, but if he was soft enough to let us impose upon him, he deserved to suffer. If he had been ordinarily sharp he would have turned me over to the tormentors at once," said Eadie, impatient to change the subject.

"But he was made out of different stuff from the kind that at that time entered into your composition. His faculty for lying was not so fully developed as yours, you see," with a familiar slap on the shoulder.

"His honesty was noteworthy," sneered Eadie. "He overcame it beautifully, however, when he put that unprincipled Dick up to 'peach' at the last," snapped Eadie.

"He never did that, Gerald, I am sure," retorted Scott. "Donald Bergh would not stoop to do such a mean thing."

"What did Dr. Armitage think of the sequel?" asked Eadie, curiously.

"I do not think the report ever reached him. It was only of local interest—scarcely that, for no one took any account of Dick after he was sent home in disgrace."

"He did not amount to much, that is certain," assented Eadie.

"He was a wonderful time righting the wrong that he helped to commit, and then to think that poor Donald bartered away his reputation for honesty—altogether for Dick's sake—such a short time afterwards."

"Donald! Did he get into trouble some way later?" exclaimed Eadie, with a quiver of excitement in his voice.

"Yes! Did you never hear about it?" inquired Scott.

"No, indeed! I supposed he was too good to go astray in the least after his experience in the Academy," was the sarcastic reply. "What did he do, pray?"

Then Scott related the story of the lost hundred dollars and of Mr. Mannering's prompt method of punishment, and with much satisfaction, Eadie answered:

"I am glad you told me about this little crookedness, for this same young hypocrite is the trusted book-keeper in our firm."

A prolonged whistle from Scott announced his surprise. "Your book-keeper! Why did you not tell me that bit of news sooner? I am sure I had no intention of doing the poor fellow injury," he exclaimed.

"You would have preferred leaving our firm to the mercy of a thief, I suppose," said Eadie, a little sharply.

"Nothing of the kind, my friend, but there was no positive proof of his guilt, and he might be innocent after all," was the reply.

"Things look rather dark for him, I should think," returned Eadie, with evident satisfaction.

"Dick brought back a report confirming Donald's explanation about the money expended in purchasing his suit, but you know how much stock people take in Dick's talk."

"Not much, if he is like he was in the old days," assented Eadie.

"He is much the old Dick, I guess; at least, those who know him best have very little faith in his pretended reformation," was Scott's reply.

"He is a poor dog and never will amount to any

good," said Eadie, and then, having gained all the information he wished, he adroitly managed to change the subject of conversation.

As soon as he returned to Chicago he had a private conversation with Mr. Thayer, and Scott's story becomes the property of the firm.

"I cannot credit such a thing," replied Mr. Thayer, after listening quietly to Eadie's recital. "He has always been so trustworthy."

"There is not a shadow of doubt concerning his guilt," insisted Eadie. "Mr. Scott is an old friend of mine and perfectly reliable."

"Why did not his employer prosecute him then? How does it come that the fellow is at large?" asked the merchant, dubiously.

"Mr. Mannering had great respect for the young chap's old Aunt, and it was for her sake that he was allowed to slip away so quietly," explained Eadie.

"It seems strange—strange, indeed. I am sure I would have trusted him with millions of dollars had I been so fortunate as to have possessed it."

"It is well you have been discreet in this matter, Mr. Thayer. I have always been a little suspicious of him, as you are aware, and I have related this circumstance solely to put you on your guard," responded Eadie.

"I was cognizant of that fact, but rather thought you wished to pay off some old score, and took this means of making him uncomfortable," remarked Mr. Thayer, scrutinizing the young man closely.

"Pay off some old score? And I never had seen the fellow until he came tramping around here," retorted Eadie, with a fair effort to hide his confusion.

"I did not know that, and judged from appearances alone," was the cool reply.

"And had you no misgivings concerning the story he told?"

"He told none, and I asked him no questions."

"I gave you credit for more good, solid, common sense than you seem to possess," returned the young man, dryly.

"I have been flattering myself all along that my hasty judgment on this occasion had proven exceedingly correct," responded the merchant, thoughtfully.

"It was risking a great deal to take a fellow off the street and without a recommendation give him a place of responsibility, but I have always prided myself upon my ability to read human nature, and this is the first intimation that I have had to the contrary regarding the case under consideration."

"It is singular that you did not distrust a well-dressed, well-educated fellow when he proposed to perform such menial labor," argued Eadie.

"He had an honest face, you see."

"But not an honest heart, as things have turned out. The date which Scott gave of his trouble at Egbert corresponds remarkably well with the time that he presented himself at the door of this establishment," said Eadie, convinced that facts were stubborn things and must win the way in spite of Mr. Thayer's evident reluctance to admit testimony, no matter how damaging.

"The best way to settle this matter is to let the young gentleman speak for himself. If the story is true I do not think that he will deny it," replied Mr. Thayer

"I do not think he will either," thought Eadie, but he did not say this aloud. What he did say was: "Thieves are not apt to be so conscientious as you try to make them out, but I have no objections to your interviewing the young gentleman, if you feel disposed to give him time to make a successful escape," retorted Eadie, with a mocking laugh.

"Send young Bergh to me at once," said Mr Thayer, addressing a messenger boy, who was just passing.

In a few minutes Donald made his appearance, looking bright and contented as usual.

"Morton said you wished to speak to me, sir," he said, addressing Mr. Thayer.

"I do, and on a subject that is not very pleasant, too," replied the gentleman, a little nervously. "I wish to ask you a few questions, and I trust you will answer me truthfully."

"I will to the best of my ability," returned Donald, a little perplexed.

"Then we shall have the exact truth, for the inquiries concern only yourself," was Mr. Thayer's response.

After a little hesitancy and clearing of the throat, he asked:

"Before coming here were you employed in the establishment of Mannering & Company at Egbert?"

"I was," answered Donald promptly, but the eager eyes watching him noticed a perceptible paling of his face even before he spoke.

"Why did you leave their employ?" was the next direct question.

"Because I was discharged," returned Donald, without flinching.

"For what were you discharged?" questioned Mr. Thayer, unmercifully.

"Because Mr. Mannering blamed me with extracting a hundred dollars from a roll of bills that I was entrusted to carry," replied the young man. Though his face was ashen, his voice was steady and as free from the quiver of excitement as if answering the most commonplace questions.

"And did you take the money with which you were charged?"

"I did not, sir—not a penny of it, but as I had no proof to offer, I was obliged to bear the disgrace, and to be driven away without a character," was the quick reply.

"Why did you not demand a trial?" was Mr. Thayer's instant query.

"I did, but neither my Aunt nor Mr. Mannering would consent to my request," said Donald.

"Then your Aunt believed you guilty, too?" sneered Eadie, unable longer to disguise his satisfaction of the way things were working into his hands.

"She did; but you remember she believed me the author of a crime of which I was not guilty once before," retorted Donald, with a meaning look.

Eadie made no reply. He saw that Mr. Thayer's sharp eyes were upon him, and he was afraid to give voice to the angry thoughts that Donald's words had stirred.

"Why did you not make this confession sooner?" asked Mr. Thayer, ignoring the little scene that had just taken place between the two young men.

"Simply for the reason that no one interviewed me on the subject. Had you asked me why I left my former position, I would have told you that I had

been discharged, but to have forced this knowledge upon you would have been equivalent to admitting my guilt."

"Perhaps you are right, but had I known your reputation I would not have harbored you for an hour. I trusted you fully and freely, even while others doubted the wisdom of my course. Mr. Eadie has been suspicious of you all along, and it now turns out that the youngest member of the firm has shown more knowledge of human nature than the eldest one."

"He understands just how well-founded his suspicions have been, I imagine," returned Donald, with a flash of indignation.

"We will not continue this discussion longer now," said Mr. Thayer, with an impatient gesture. "Go back to your work, and in an hour come to me for your answer. I must consult with my partners before disposing finally of the case."

Donald walked slowly back to his desk, and in a mechanical way finished the work upon which he had been engaged when interrupted. He then went carefully over all his accounts for the quarter, feeling that it was his duty to leave every thing in good shape, for from the first notification of the trouble he was convinced that he would be obliged to go.

At the expiration of the hour he went back to Mr. Thayer's office, and received from that gentleman an order for the month's salary that was due, followed by the information that hereafter his services would not be acceptable.

CHAPTER XX.

DICK'S STORY.

IF Aunt Penelope ever regretted her hasty decision in banishing her nephew she kept it to herself. From the day that he went forth from beneath the shelter of her roof it was understood that the name of Donald Bergh was not to be mentioned in her presence. Christine became very restless under her Aunt's exacting rules, and day after day she watched the mail, hoping that some word from the wanderer might come, but the year wore slowly away without bringing so much as a line to the waiting girl. She missed Donald sadly, for since Dick had proven so reckless he had been more than a brother to her. When the second spring came round Dick burst in upon them unannounced and quite as suddenly as he had disappeared. Christine was delighted and gave him a warm reception, while Aunt Penelope stood looking upon the scene with darkening brow.

"Will you not bid me welcome, Aunt Pen?" he said, advancing toward her with extended hand.

"No, I will not, Dick," she replied, waving him back.

"Why not?" he asked, with much of his old independence.

"Is it possible, sir, that you have the impudence to come back after all that has passed?" she growled, indignantly.

"You are a little hard on a fellow to thus give him the cold shoulder when more than a year has passed since he ventured into your presence. You really ought to say something nice, if only as an inducement for him to try the same experiment again," he said, not the least ruffled by her brusqueness.

"Humph! I reckon he can be made stay away without so much ceremony. I am not glad to see you, Dick, and I am not in the habit of lying about such small things, as you are doubtless aware," she snapped, as she returned to her easy chair in the corner.

"You have always had the reputation of being truthful, Aunt, and I see you are not disposed to go back on your former good conduct now. I am glad you are so honest, and I will promise to make my visit to Christine very short."

"You never was much of a credit to the family, but that you should drag others down to your level was more than I expected. I wonder that you are not afraid to make your appearance in town. How do you know but that the police are on your track now?"

"What do you mean, Aunt? Do explain yourself. I look as respectable as other young men of your acquaintance, do I not? Does Donald himself wear better clothes than the suit I now have on?"

"Just listen to the fellow's assurance. If it had not been for you that boy might have been in his place to day," gasped the irritated woman. "He never would have touched a dollar of that money if you had not dogged his steps continually. I said before, and I repeat it, Donald Bergh was only a tool in your hands. I do wonder that you are not afraid

to return to the neighborhood where your crime is still fresh in the minds of an indignant people,"

"Crime! robbery! Pray enlighten me, Aunt," exclaimed Dick, looking keenly at the old lady as she sat rocking to and fro.

"Dear me! I wouldn't suppose that you stood in need of much light on the subject. Did you reckon that a man would allow himself to be robbed of a hundred dollars without putting forth an effort to protect his own interest?"

"I infer from your remarks, Aunt, that somebody has been tampering with somebody's money, and that Donald and myself have been credited with the theft. Is not that about the run of your story?"

"You really have made a very good guess, considering the fact that you were wholly ignorant of the circumstances," said Aunt Pen, with an insinuating nod.

"Guess or no guess, Aunt, I never knew a breath of the unfortunate affair until this minute. I hope Donald has not been punished for a crime he did not commit."

"You do not mean to say that you received no money from your Cousin during that mysterious trip that began at the door of the bank?" insisted the old woman, leaning forward so as to catch every word of his answer.

"He gave me money to buy a suit of clothes, or rather he went with me and paid for such as I selected, for he would not trust me with the twenty dollar bill, which, he said, was a present from his Uncle Robert Lee."

"There, Aunt! I told you Donald was telling the truth, and you cannot help believing his story now,

for Dick's statement agrees with his in every particular," cried Christine, who had been trying to choke back her sobs for several minutes.

"Don't be a fool, child!" retorted Aunt Pen. "Don't be a fool, I say. As if the two could not have planned their story together. Do you think they would be silly enough to part without having agreed what they would tell?"

"I assure you, Aunt, there was no arrangement of that kind between us. I asked him to lend me some money to take me away, so that I could begin a better life, and you know Donald never turned a deaf ear to my requests, no matter how absurd they were."

"Are you quite sure that he did not meddle with the roll of bills in his pocket?" cried Aunt Pen, in excitement, grasping him tightly by the arm.

"Never was surer of any thing in my life, Aunt. In fact, I did not know that he had a roll of bills in his possession. I asked him if there would be any chance of getting aid from you, but he advised me not to come here. When I told him of my good resolution he mentioned the gift of his Uncle. He said he had been keeping it a secret, as he intended to make you and Christine handsome Christmas presents, but as no man could live a respectable life while clothed in rags he believed he would trust me with it, and he hoped I would try to live a better, truer life. So what would have gone to the purchase of some trinket for you went into a decent outfit for me. I did not get the clothes, however, until I had entered into a written contract to go away and stay until I could earn my own living in an honorable way. His faith in me inspired new confidence in my own heart, and now, after more than a year's trial, I have come back to

show you all what a miracle has been wrought by kindness, as well as to replace the money my Cousin expended upon me when he had very little reason to expect any good results to follow his self-denying act."

"And you believe Robert Lee sent him that money?"

"I have not the least doubt of the fact, Aunt. Donald Bergh would scorn to touch a cent that did not belong to him, and you know it."

"It is very singular that he kept such good news a profound secret so long," snapped Aunt Pen, as she took up the knitting that had fallen from her hands upon Dick's first entrance.

Judging from the clash of his Aunt's needles and the look of fierce determination upon her face that she had dismissed him from her thoughts for the present, Dick turned to Christine with:

"Where is Donald now?"

"That is just what I would like to know myself," was Christine's reply. "He went away the very day that you left, and we have never heard a word from him since. He may be dead for all I know."

"Dead! not a bit of it. He'll turn up all right some of these times," interrupted Aunt Pen, but, though her words were indifferent, there was a tremor in her voice that showed she was by no means as heartless as she would have them believe.

"And did Mr. Mannering really believe that he stole that hundred dollars. You have not told me about the circumstances," said Dick, much concerned.

Christine then related all the particulars of the unhappy affair, winding up with an indignant pro-

test against the hasty decision of all who had in any way aided in his undeserved removal.

"So, then, it is a case of pure circumstantial evidence," said Dick. "I wonder Donald did not stand up for his rights, and demand a fair and impartial trial. He could not have been convicted upon such flimsy evidence."

"He did ask for a trial, but Mr. Mannering would not listen to him. He said such a procedure would only give publicity to the affair, and for Aunt's sake such a scandal should be avoided," Christine explained in a sarcastic voice.

"Nothing shall be left undone to right this fearful wrong," said Dick, rising and pacing the floor excitedly. "So this is the thanks he has received for the kindness shown me—this is the reward that Christian people have meted out to him for making a man of a poor outcast—one who had neither home nor friends."

After a few more words with Christine, who was as much exercised as himself, Dick announced his intention of going back to the hotel, where he had left his baggage.

"You'll do no such a thing," said Aunt Pen. "Go to the hotel, indeed! A pretty story that would be to go to the world. You stop at a second-rate hotel, and your sister a member of my household! Send Abram over to that concern after your effects, and make yourself at home while you are here. I suppose you are not going to stay long."

"No, Aunt, I will only trouble you a short time—shorter, indeed, than I had set, for I must get back to begin my search for Donald."

"When the boy is proven innocent will be time

enough to begin looking him up. Don't you know, Dick, that your word would not be very weighty in court?" said Aunt Pen, a little tauntingly.

Dick colored painfully at this home thrust, but he had not forgotten what a vagabond he used really to be, so he put away the harsh words that trembled upon his lips, and merely reiterated his determination to find his Cousin and set him right before the world. During his two weeks' stay Aunt Pen did not mention Donald's name again, but Dick was satisfied that her apparent indifference was assumed, and that the exiled nephew occupied much of her thoughts.

Dick's religion was so different from Aunt Pen's that he had not the heart to claim her kinship in Christ, and had it not been for his daily Bible reading he would have gone away without either of the women at home finding out the cause of the great change that had taken place in his conduct.

"How can you endure to read that dull, uninteresting book?" asked Christine, coming into room, unexpectedly, one day.

"It is not dull, Chrissy. I love to read it," was Dick's reply.

"I am sure you did not think that way when Aunt Pen made you study your tasks," sneered his sister.

"And if the reading were a set task it yet would be just as much of a burden as ever."

"Why, Dick, you frighten me," cried Christine, striking a ridiculous attitude. "If you keep on you'll be as bad as Aunt Pen. Whatever you do don't get religion. It is an awful disease and one which will be apt to stick to you for life."

"What would you say were I to tell you that I had experienced the power of religion and that I

am in possession of its enjoyments even now?" he asked.

Christine looked at him steadily for a few moments, not knowing whether to laugh or cry, and then, thinking the whole thing a good joke, she laughed gleefully.

"It is so ridiculous for you, Dick Jewell, to talk about having religion. Now, if it had been Donald, or Fred Mannering, or any of the boys, it would not have seemed so queer, but you, Dick—you are surely in fun—you do not mean for me to believe you?"

"I never was more in earnest in my life, Chrissy," said Dick, tenderly. And then he went on to tell her how he had found a Friend in Jesus, and how very different life seemed since he had something besides self to employ his thoughts. Turning suddenly to her, he said:—"I do wish you could have the help of my Saviour, little sister. You would never—never be lonely again."

"Hush, hush!" she exclaimed angrily, sticking her fingers in her ears. "You can have religion, if you take to it so naturally, but Aunt Pen is all the Christian we need around this house. One in a family is enough at a time."

"This is very wrong, Christine," Dick answered, reproachfully. "I do wish you could feel what a blessed thing it is to be a Christian."

"There, there, Dick! don't preach. I cannot forget what a bright example you used to be. Some of your capers were mean enough to make a heathen blush. Keep your goodness to yourself, for I know of no one who needs a little humanizing worse than yourself," was Christine's impatient harangue.

Dick's face turned first very red, then very white,

and he had to shut his lips tightly to keep back the burning words that as old Dick Jewell he wished so much to speak. He did not venture on this dangerous ground again, and a few days later he went back West, determined not to rest until he should succeed in finding Donald. When he passed through Chicago on his way back to Springfield, he was within half a dozen blocks of the object of his search, but, being ignorant of this fact, he continued his journey, and by carefully worded advertisements in a score of the Western dailies sought for the information he so longed to possess.

Donald was not in the habit of glancing over the columns of "Wanted" and "Lost," and consequently remained in blissful ignorance of the praiseworthy efforts of his Cousin.



CHAPTER XXI.

THE MISSING LETTER.

THE week after Dick went away from Aunt Pen's a circumstance occurred that Christine very much regretted he was not there to witness. Under Aunt Pen's supervision, the young girl was engaged in taking up the sitting-room carpet for the annual house-cleaning. In lifting one of the newspapers that had served as carpet protector a letter fell from its folds upon the floor. As she picked it up Christine noticed that it was addressed to "Donald Bergh," and bore the post-mark of the village in which his Uncle Robert Lee had lived and died. A close scrutiny of the date stamped upon the back showed it had been mailed on August 4, 18—, the exact time, according to Donald's testimony, when that fateful letter had been written.

"Aunt Pen, I do believe that I have found Donald's long-lost letter," she exclaimed, nervously. "It surely looks like Mr. Lee's writing."

"Nothing of the sort, I'll warrant. Things don't turn up that way except in novels," retorted Aunt Pen. "Throw it in the fire and attend to your work."

"I can't do that, for I am sure I've found what will clear him," examining the letter more closely.

"The quickest way to decide that matter is to open and read it," said Aunt Pen, extending her hand for

the letter. "You do not expect to find out any thing without examining the contents."

Adjusting her spectacles, she took the sheet from the envelope, and after what seemed to Christine a wonderful long time read aloud:

Bedford, Pa., August 4, 18—.

MY DEAR NEPHEW:

I enclose a twenty dollar bill for your birthday gift. Trusting that you will find as much pleasure in receiving as I do in giving, I close my brief letter by wishing you many returns of the happy occasion. With much love I remain
Your Affectionate Uncle, ROBERT LEE.

"Well, it does beat all! How do you suppose it ever got there?" was Aunt Pen's exclamation.

"It must have been concealed somehow in the folds of the paper," Christine said, as she took up the journal. "The date corresponds with that of the letter," she added, running her eyes over the head lines.

"Strange, indeed! If I had only known this sooner; but who would have thought of looking for a missing letter under the carpet? I mind now of asking Donald to bring an armful of papers down from the garret to put under the carpet when we cleaned the room. He must have put some of his own among them. Yes, you see this is a daily, and I never took one of those scandalous sheets in my life. That is just the way it all came about, but it is monstrous strange. I wish I had known it sooner."

"You remember I reminded you of Donald's honesty at the time, Aunt Pen. I was confident that he was being wronged when you sent him away, and I'll always be thankful that I protested against the way he was treated," said Christine, enjoying immensely her Aunt's evident regret.

"Christine Jewell, I wish you to remember that you are talking to your betters. It makes no difference in the case what you thought or said at the time. It was all a mistake on my part, and Donald would not blame me if he were here at this moment. He never was the least bit like you—never."

"Indeed, he was not, Aunt Pen. If he had been, he would have made you and old Mannering prove your scandalous charge, or take it back and pay damages for the injury you had done," answered Christine, her black eyes snapping with just indignation.

"And how am I to know that he is innocent even now?" retorted Aunt Pen, with much warmth. "If Robert Lee did send him twenty dollars, how do I know that Mr. Mannering's money was not used to purchase finery for Dick? It is still more than probable that he helped himself to that roll of money he carried. Dick's word does not amount to much at any rate."

Christine flushed hotly at this uncharitable thrust at her brother. She was well aware that Dick's reputation for veracity was not the best—or it had not been in the old days—but a radical change had come over him during the months of his absence—he was even a professing Christian, with much more of its spirit than Aunt Pen exhibited herself; besides, he never had been good at acting, and any one could have told from his looks that the story of Donald's theft was a genuine surprise to him. Christine knew that Aunt Pen believed Donald's story, and she was angry at the deceit she was practising.

"You know better than that, Aunt," she said, looking the old woman squarely in the eyes. "You do

believe that Dick told the truth—you know it, and it is not right for you to continue your persecutions of him when he has reformed.”

“Well, now, I should say that you are making a fool of yourself, Christine. Your preaching will never amount to much until you change your life, and act in a manner becoming a person. I said before, and I say again, Dick is not to be trusted. I take no stock in his pretended reformation.”

But in spite of her assertion she carried the letter to Mr. Mannering, and in his presence stated her belief in Donald's integrity.

Dick's story had impressed the merchant strangely, and the discovery of the letter went far towards confirming his statement; still that hundred dollars must be accounted for, and it lay between Donald and Mr. Bateman—a man of unimpeachable character. After studying the matter over carefully, he shook his head gravely, saying:

“My dear madam, much as I would like to remove this stigma from the name of your nephew, until something turns up to show the whereabouts of the missing money I cannot take such a step as you desire without compromising a man of sterling integrity. Just let the matter rest awhile. Waiting can do Donald no further harm than has already befallen him; besides, we do not know where to find him were his innocence clearly proven.”

“In these days of railroads and telegraphs it is almost impossible for one to be entirely lost—at least, folks who are trying to hide from justice are not generally very successful in their efforts,” returned Aunt Pen, a little sharply.

“That is true; but in this case, what would we do

with the found youth if, after all, we were unable to establish his innocence? Don't you see, madam, that we have no proof, I mean conclusive proof, that he did not meddle with that hundred dollars? That letter would establish nothing in the eyes of the law."

"It shows that he told the truth, and accounts for the money he gave Dick at any rate," snapped Aunt Pen, indignantly.

"It proves that, but it don't explain how he expended the money taken from that roll of bills intrusted to his care. Don't you see the testimony is not broad enough to cover the whole case? Just have patience a little longer, and maybe some new developments may be made," said Mr. Mannering, speaking in a hopeful voice.

"There's Dick's word to back the letter up," suggested Aunt Pen.

"O, O, yes! Dick's word to be sure! But then you know that hereabouts Dick's word don't amount to much," returned Mr. Mannering, with a cynical smile.

"I believe the boy is all right now. He has sowed considerable wild oats in his time, but all young fellows do that, and I trust Dick has finished planting his crop," was Aunt Pen's answer.

"I trust he has, but somebody will have to reap the wild crop he has sown, and if we believe the Bible we must expect that this reaper must be Dick himself. I wish the young man well, but I must be allowed to take his word at considerable discount, Mrs. Garth," said the merchant, bowing pleasantly.

"Good afternoon, sir!" was Aunt Pen's reply, as she turned away and walked stiffly out of the door.

After this, though they frequently met, the subject

was not discussed again; and right or wrong, poor Donald seemed to have passed completely out of their lives.

But there came a time—it was a sultry morning in August—when the doors of the Citizen's National Bank did not yield to the pressure of the outside world, and those who had money invested turned away sick at heart. Before the sun went down it was generally known that the cashier was missing, and with him half a million of the people's money had disappeared.

An investigation of the books revealed the startling fact that a systematic robbery had been in progress for a number of years, and that the thief was no less a distinguished gentleman than Mr. Bateman, the honest, upright, unimpeachable man, whose integrity no one, heretofore, even dared to call in question.

That afternoon Mr. Mannering came to Aunt Pen with a solution of the mystery that had been puzzling them both for so long.

Said the old man, when speaking of their great mistake:

“We have wronged Donald, wronged him deeply, and the fault was all my own. I considered Mr. Bateman the very soul of honor, and it was my short-sighted convictions that misled you. This catastrophe will cripple me badly, but I deserve to suffer for the way I set that boy adrift. I mean to look him up right away, and he can have his choice of positions in the establishment, which was never in a more prosperous condition than at this present time.”

“Little use there'll be in your search. Dick has been looking for him high and low for the last six months, but not a breath of him has he heard. He

seems to be as completely lost as if dead and hid away under the ground."

"I'll find him; trust me for that. Dick has not the money at hand to make a successful search, but if it takes every dollar I have I'll find him," said Mr. Mannering, hopefully.

"If he is living," returned Aunt Pen, dolefully.

"O! he is living, of course. You don't catch hearty, industrious lads like him dying till their time comes," laughed Mr. Mannering.

"I am sure I hope that you will be successful, but things do not look very flattering," was Aunt Pen's rejoinder. "This thing of misjudging people becomes quite serious sometimes."

"You are right, madam. I feel like a criminal to-night myself, but I was honest in my convictions, and thought I was doing my duty; but the best of us may be mistaken."

"Best or worst, you and I have had a lesson on charity that we will not soon forget," argued Aunt Pen, spitefully.

"I hope their consciences will keep them from resting for a few nights. They both deserve to suffer, and they will. See if they don't," soliloquized Christine, who had arranged her work so as to be in the vicinity of the door during their discussion. She was not rejoicing over the downfall of poor Mr. Bateman, but she was really glad that something had occurred to open Mr. Mannering's eyes. "Things have just turned out as Donald said they would," she said aloud. "He always thought that Mr. Bateman had not given him enough bills, and now it is proven."

"If I should take a notion to run down to Chicago in the morning I will let you know," said Mr. Mannering.

"Very well; although I do not know that any thing that I can do would be of service to you," said Aunt Pen.

"Keep up a good heart and all will be right," was Mr. Mannering's response, as he bowed himself out.



CHAPTER XXII.

A VISIT TO THE Y. M. C. A.

FOR a few moments after Mr. Thayer had pronounced his doom Donald stood gazing in a bewildered way into his face; then he turned away and walked slowly down the long store room like one in a dream. At the door he staggered forward and would have fallen had he not caught hold of the railing for support. Feeling faint and dizzy, he leaned heavily against the stone pillar, uncertain what to do next. The keen frosty air revived him and brought back to his memory the cause of his sudden illness. He drew his hand across his forehead a time or two to make sure that he was really awake. Satisfied that he was not under the influence of a horrible nightmare, he called his energies into active play, and was soon sufficiently revived to trust himself to mingle with the passing crowd. This was the second time that he had been driven from his employment by the same base calumny. He had thought the old story was destined to die a natural death—that, at least, he was out of reach of its blighting power—but here, after lying quiet for nearly two years, it had come up against him, with even more deadly effect than before, and again he was a wanderer, without home and without friends. He understood to whom he was indebted for this cruel blow; by degrees he was learning how deep was the hatred of this man who had

wronged him so terribly once before, and he felt bitter towards that one who, with all the advantages life possessed, insisted in taking from him the one thing he held most sacred on earth—his good name. He had but few intimate associates in the city, and even these he did not wish to meet under the circumstances that compelled him to go. Feeling under obligations to bid his instructor good-by, he went round to his office to tell him that he was going away. The old man inquired into the cause of the sudden arrangement, and when he heard the pitiful story, he denounced the whole of his persecutors, and said he would take his word in preference to all the evidence that could be heaped up against him by the other side. Said he:

“I am determined to look into the merits of this case, and I feel confident that I can compel these people to clear your name of the stigma, which, through their influence, has been attached to it. Right will always triumph in the end. Keep up your spirits, boy, and all will be well.”

But all was not well, for in the rush of business and family turmoil the old man forgot that this poor, friendless youth was looking to him for redress. For a few weeks after Donald left the city, he kept looking anxiously for the letter that he hoped would set him right before the world, but it never came, and at length, grown weary with his useless vigil, he continued his travels westward, hoping, somewhere in the growing cities, to find a place that he might hide away from his persecutors and be at rest. He knew that he was tired and discouraged, but, until he awoke one morning with a burning skin and a racking pain in his head, he did not understand that his unusual

depression had been caused by the disease lurking in his system. He had only expected to spend the night in that little inland town, where a change of cars was necessary, but for weeks he was destined to lie, moaning and tossing, upon the hard bed in the one little hotel the village afforded. When at last he was able to be around again, he found that his savings of the two years was well-nigh gone, and that, regardless of the condition of his health, he would be obliged to go to work as soon as possible.

Without any definite purpose in view, he took the first train to Springfield, and was soon afterwards comfortably settled in a quiet, homelike hotel. For several days he kept up an unsuccessful search for employment, each succeeding evening returning to his room more and more discouraged and homesick.

One afternoon, having determined to seek his fortune in a Southern city, he went down to the office to inquire what time the train for that place would take its departure.

"Indeed, I cannot tell you, but you will find a correct time-table in this paper," said the clerk, handing him the morning daily.

Donald was not long in ascertaining that the only through train running to the point he wished to reach would not leave until the next morning. Glancing hurriedly over the paper, his eyes fell upon this item of news:—"Y. M. C. A. meets to-night at 7 P. M. in its rooms over Music Hall. All the young men in the city cordially invited. A special invitation extended to strangers. Do not fail to come. A good time is anticipated."

"I'll go," said Donald to himself, brightening up

a little. "I never was in such a place in my life, and the experience will have the virtue of being novel, at least. It is kind of the club, or whatever they call it, to pay any attention to strangers, and it cannot prove duller than my own brooding promises to do. Yes, I have made up my mind, and if something very important does not interfere I will go and see what good these fellows can do me."

Nothing so important as to make him break his promise did occur; so, promptly at the hour designated, he presented himself at the door of the room mentioned, and was shown to a seat by the courteous usher. The room, though large, was filling up rapidly, and every one who came in seemed to carry sunshine in his face.

"You are a stranger among us, and we not only bid you welcome, but wish you to feel at home," said a pleasant voice, as a young man handed him a hymn book. Then he passed on with bright, cheery words to others—perhaps, just as lonely and home sick as he was himself.

Scarcely had the young man taken his seat when a voice clear and ringing began to sing:

"Yes, for me, for me he careth
With a brother's tender care;
Yes, with me, with me he shareth
Every burden, every fear."

As soon as the words ended the leader said in a low but very distinct voice:—"We want the presence of our Saviour throughout every moment of this meeting. Let us ask him to come into our hearts at the very beginning of the hour."

Instantly every head was bowed, and then in earnest, pleading tones the leader asked that every one

in the house might receive the very blessing he most needed.

I said every head was bowed. I should have excepted Donald Bergh's, for, in spite of all the courtesy that had been shown him since entering, there he sat—bolt upright, staring at the curly head bowed upon the leader's desk. A thunder-bolt out of a clear sky would have seemed as much out of place as that face and voice at a prayer-meeting, for much as he tried to convince himself that he was mistaken he knew that it was his Cousin Dick who occupied the leader's chair and prayed as though it was a service he very much enjoyed. After a verse of

“Each day to live for Jesus,”

there was a service of voluntary prayer, and this time Donald managed to get his head down with the rest. But, though the petitions were fervent and importunate, except that they were brief and pointed, he could not have told how they differed from the most ordinary ones that he had been accustomed to hear in the little old-fashioned chapel at home.

After this Dick read the last few verses of the eighth chapter of Romans—then there was more singing—a few brief remarks and recitations of Scripture verses—followed by another season of prayer. Before the hour expired Dick stood up and said it was time for the Strangers' Service, and he hoped many who were present would feel so much at home as to offer a prayer or speak a few words for the Master.

Several of the young men who had enjoyed the hour took this opportunity to express their gratitude and bid their Christian brothers God-speed. Donald

would like to have added his testimony, but as he was not a Christian he feared that it would not be just the right thing to do. The last song announced was Miss Havergal's familiar Consecration Hymn, beginning:

"Take my life and let it be
Consecrated Lord to thee."

Up to this time Donald had not joined in the singing, but this hymn had been a favorite with his mother—they had often sung it together before she died—and now for the first time in years his clear, rich voice helped to swell the sweet strains arising from more than a hundred lips.

Dick could have told that voice among a thousand, but it was a little more difficult for his eyes to select its owner from among the score of strangers scattered here and there among the young men of his acquaintance. For a moment he looked bewildered, and then his blue eyes met a pair of honest dark ones, which, though set in a very pale face, he recognized at once. Scarcely had the last strain of the organ died away before he had reached his Cousin's side and taken his hand in a warm, loving grasp.

"O, Donald! Is it possible that after all my long, wearisome search I have found you right here at home?" he cried, his voice full of suppressed emotion.

"You surely have found me, Dick, or rather I have found you, for I have not been able to take my eyes off you since I came in," answered Donald.

"Well, I am rejoiced to see you again, no matter how the meeting was brought about," said Dick. "But you look pale. Have you been sick?" he asked, anxiously.

"I am just getting over a spell of fever—in fact, I am a little shaky yet," said Donald.

"You must come right home with me," replied Dick. "I have news for you that will soon bring the color back to your face," he added, slipping his Cousin's arm within his own.

Dick was still an inmate of the Kent household, and the room to which he introduced his guest was a marvel—not of grandeur, but of beautiful simplicity and comfort.

Donald sank into the easy-chair which Dick had drawn close up to the bright, sparkling fire, and there, with flushed face and throbbing heart, Donald listened to the revelation that Dick had to make. He commenced with an account of his own visit home, and the surprise his story gave Aunt Pen and Mr. Man-nering. Then he related the story of the lost letter and recounted the links in the chain of evidence which its mysterious finding supplied. After this he told the sad tale of Mr. Bateman's blighted life and the disclosures made by his flight.

"And now," said he, "after eight months of anxious search, I rejoice to be the bearer of such good news to one who suffered so much on my account."

"It is good news, Dick, and I can never thank you enough for standing up so bravely for me," replied Donald.

"As though I did not owe every thing I am and possess to your kindness, Donald. You trusted me even when I had no faith in myself, and the thought that you expected me to stand up for the right has helped me over many a hard, rough place."

"I am glad that I have been able to help you in the least, Dick, but I am sure that you have gone on

far in advance of me in the line you occupied to-night."

"That, under God, I owe to the Christian home-life of the family that resides under this roof. I never knew before what practical religion meant. You know I had no exalted views of Aunt Pen's creeds and catechism, but when I came here, bruised and sick, I learned something of the power of sympathy and appreciation; but you must have the experience that has been mine before you can realize the blessings I have enjoyed."

It was the first time in his life that Donald gave his confidence to his Cousin Dick, but before they closed their eyes that night he was free to admit to himself that no better fellow than this impulsive, warm-hearted kinsman was alive.



CHAPTER XXIII.

NEW FRIENDS AND OLD.

WHEN Donald awoke in the morning he was unable to rise. The exertion and joy of the evening had proven too much for him in his weakened condition.

"I fear I am in for another spell of fever," he said, as Dick heaped more coal on the grate, and in his blundering way tried to tuck the blankets more closely around the shivering patient.

"It is one of those mean chills that infests our climate. Just listen how your teeth chatter," replied Dick.

"If I am to be sick again I'll go to the hospital at once," began Donald, remembering the low state of his finances.

"You will go to no hospital while you are a guest of mine," said Dick, positively. "That would be a pretty story, indeed, after all the trouble I have had in hunting you up. You will just lie here and get well and strong, and it will take no great length of time, either."

Donald tried to reply, but he was shaking so hard that he had to give up his efforts to talk and let Dick run things to suit himself. This the good-hearted fellow did by bringing Dr. Kent up-stairs to prescribe for the sufferer.

"You have talked him almost to death, Dick," said the Doctor dryly, with his finger on the patient's bounding pulse. "Hereafter you must be more considerate. Remember your friend has been sick, and cannot endure as much as a robust fellow like you. However, a few days' rest and a good tonic will set him on his feet again."

"If you think I am going to have a long sick-spell, Doctor, I wish you to tell me the truth," Donald urged, looking the medical gentleman square in the face.

"No more of your nonsense about going to the hospital," replied the Doctor. "You see Dick has been telling tales," laughingly.

"But really, Doctor, I would prefer—"

"I am the Doctor, and I prefer that you remain just where you are for the present. If you obey me you will be about in a few days, but if you go to the hospital you will die," interrupted the Doctor.

"I am sure you are right," said Dick, giving the Doctor a grateful look. "Donald must submit to your judgment, if he will not to mine."

Donald smiled, wondering how much of the Doctor's judgment Dick had helped to form on this occasion, but he wisely concluded not to wound his Cousin's feelings by trying any farther to carry his point.

A few minutes after the Doctor had gone a bright face peeped in at the open door, and a cheery voice said:—"Here is some medicine that mamma sent your patient, Dick, and she hopes he will pay her the compliment to swallow it."

"Come in and see that he takes it according to your mother's prescription," said Dick. "This is the long-lost friend of whom you have heard me speak, Bessie. Will you not welcome him?"

"Indeed, I will, Dick—" but an exclamation from the sick friend caused her to stop abruptly.

"I am sure we have met before," said Donald, recovering his self-possession first.

"I never have forgotten the voice that gave me such a thrill of gratitude on that awful night," gasped Bessie, changing color.

"Nor have I forgotten the face that was turned so pleadingly to me," returned Donald, with a warm grasp of the hand.

"And you never told me of your adventure, Bessie," said Dick, reproachfully.

"I never thought of my gallant knight and your Cousin being the self-same person, Dick. Had I known it you may be very certain that I would not have allowed him to leave my Uncle's door without telling him something about his Cousin Dick."

"You forget that I do not understand how he came to be at your Uncle's door," was Dick's response.

"How very thoughtless I am," said Bessie, and then, in as few words as possible, she recounted the circumstance under which the meeting had taken place.

Before the day was over Donald was convinced that Dick had not overdrawn the picture of the sweet home-life of this happy family. As he lay there in the gathering twilight he went over the scenes of the day, and wondered if it could be religion that made the difference between the Kent household and other families of his acquaintance. I do not wish to make the impression that perfect harmony existed between the various members of this model home at all times. They were human—just like you and I—and had their likes and dislikes—their eccentrici-

ties and prejudices—as other mortals have theirs, but they were practical Christians, and the Golden Rule as given by their common Master was their rule of faith and practice, and by its constant application much of the friction and jarring incident to human life were prevented.

If Dick thought that Sunshine Bessie fitted so admirably into the niche that she had chosen among the King's Daughters, he was equally well pleased with the self-possessed, exacting Gladys presiding over hospitals and orphans' homes, but he never had become quite reconciled to the beautiful, gifted, but rather inconsistent, Helen's place among the sewers. She might have belonged to the Singing Ten, for she could warble like a bird herself; or she might have been a member of the Flower Mission Ten, for she possessed exquisite taste, and her face was as fair as the fairest of lilies, but to see her stitching away on some coarse garment, pricking her delicate fingers, often until the blood stained the cotton fabric upon which she was working, put him in mind of the stories he had read of the penance required of young novices in the convents. If there was one thing of which Gladys was less tolerant than another, it was the constant flow of sunshine that emanated from her bright young sister Bessie.

One evening, after Donald was able to walk down to the parlor, Gladys brought her sewing and sat down by the window to entertain him. It was a bright, sunshiny day, and the young folks were engaged in a quiet game on the lawn. Presently, like fairy music, Bessie's sweet voice came floating in at the half-open door.

“How that child can be so light-hearted when there

is so much misery in the world, and so much work waiting to be done, I cannot conceive," said Gladys, closing the door to shut out the happy strains. After a moment's thought she added, "She has no more idea of the responsibilities of life than a bird warbling and carolling songs, free as the air, from morning to night."

"Is that not the most philosophical thing to do under the circumstances?" asked Louis, glancing up into his sister's troubled face.

"I can see no philosophy in turning one's back upon the grim realities of life. It is braver to face them with a fixed purpose of obtaining a victory."

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these," repeated Louis, with a joyous ring in his voice.

"Do you think, Louis, that by these words our Saviour meant to teach us that we were to put forth no efforts to procure the ordinary comforts of life? Has he not given many lessons to encourage us to help ourselves?" and there was a touch of impatience in the young girl's voice that worried Louis. However, having taken up the younger sister's defence, he answered softly:

"I think our precious Lord, while laying down our duty regarding the work he wishes us to accomplish, gives us exceedingly plain directions not to worry or grow impatient over its fulfilment."

"But is it right for some to bear the burdens, while others enjoy the pleasures of a life that should be equally shared?" inquired Gladys, snapping her thread a little vindictively.

"It is not always those who perform the most labor that render the best service," answered Louis. "Has not a merry laugh or a sweet song a mission to perform, as well as a neatly kept house, an inviting dinner or a heap of warm clothing for an orphans' home? Has not Bessie's charming ways and cheery voice much to do with keeping the furrows from father's brow and the wrinkles from mother's cheeks, as well as bringing joy and sunshine into the home? Do not forget that while you may minister in a wearisome way, they may also serve who only stand and wait."

"Do you suppose, brother, that it is to this idle service that our Lord refers when he says, 'Go work in my vineyard?'" asked Gladys.

"I do not wish to distress you, Gladys, for I appreciate the noble work you accomplish, but sometimes I cannot help but think that if the Master should come suddenly upon the earth he would say to you as he said to Martha, 'Thou art careful and troubled about many things!' Bessie is surely in possession of the one thing needful, and she enjoys the better part that cannot be taken away from her!" was the decision of Louis.

"What is your opinion on this troublesome subject?" asked Gladys, turning her eyes upon Donald.

For a few moments he sat as if in deep study, and then he said, truthfully:—"I am a stranger to the experience of religion, but if I have an opinion at all on the subject, I am compelled to say that I like Bessie's kind the best. My mother was a true Christian, and I believed in her faith, but since I have been knocking about the world I have seen so much of the inconsistencies of church members that it has taken a full week in this happy home, that breathes

of heaven, to restore my faith in the Christian religion. Dick told me before I had been in the house an hour that he owed his conversion to this family's Christian living. He said he did not so much believe in preaching Christ as living Christ, and I believe in Dick's religion."

"What a beautiful testimony to a Christian home," assented Gladys.

"And it was the thoughts of this bright home and the sunshine of Bessie's patient endeavors to coax me back to a pure and holy living that arrested my wayward feet while a wanderer, and brought me back a broken-hearted penitent," declared Louis softly, while the tears trickled slowly down his cheeks.

"Flowers wither and die if denied sunshine and shower," murmured Gladys. "It must be so with hearts, too. Who knows but that more of enjoying and less of serving might please my Maker better, while adding more enjoyment to the home-life at the same time?"



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TANGLES STRAIGHTENED OUT.

“**I** MUST dispatch to Aunt Pen the first thing in the morning. It would be too bad to keep her waiting the slow motions of the mail for such good news,” was what Dick told himself the last thing before he closed his eyes on that eventful night. He was in earnest, but in the morning when he found how ill Donald really was he determined to write a letter and thus give the sufferer a few days to recuperate. After the letter was written he carried it about in his pocket several days, not wishing to give Aunt Pen undue anxiety concerning the issue of her nephew’s sickness. As soon as Donald was able to walk down stairs and take his meals with the family the mail carried the welcome message to the old homestead.

Aunt Pen had been unusually cross and irritating that morning and took the letter out of Abram’s hand with a jerk. Adjusting her glasses in a very leisurely way, she proceeded to examine the envelope carefully before breaking the seal.

“It’s from Dick. I reckon he’s after money or something as valuable again. He never writes to me unless he is wanting something.”

“Perhaps, he has news of Donald,” suggested Christine.

“Nonsense! That is all you can think about,” was Aunt Pen’s curt rejoinder; but in spite of her

apparent indifference she tore open the letter and glanced hastily over its contents. Christine saw the change that passed over her countenance and knew instinctively that her guess had been correct.

"He has found Donald at last," said she, her old eyes sparkling with pleasure. "But you need not think that your smartness had any thing to do with it," she added, with a side glance at Christine's beaming countenance.

"Here, take the letter and read it for yourself. I must go at once to consult with Mr. Mannering."

"Better let me bring him here, madam. The pavements are mighty splashy just now," said Abram.

"You'd better attend to your own business, sir. I suppose I am capable of arranging my own affairs, and I said I was going down to see Mr. Mannering, and I am. So there!" snapped the old woman.

"Then let me bring the carriage round for your accommodation," insisted Abram. "This weather is bad for your rheumatism."

"Do you think I am a useless invalid, not able to walk a few rods?" asked the irritable woman. "Christine, don't devour that letter. You have had plenty of time to master its contents. Go up-stairs and bring my wraps, and don't be all day about it, either."

Christine was too happy just then to retort, or even prolong her absence, as was her custom when her Aunt used that tone in commanding her, and in ten minutes after the arrival of the letter Aunt Pen was on her way to Mr. Mannering's office.

"Just listen what Dick writes," she said, after making known her business:—"You would not know him, Aunt Pen. He has been shaking with the ague

until he can scarcely walk alone. A few months ago he was dismissed from the firm of Thayer & Company, of Chicago, through the influence of that detestable sneak, Gerald Eadie, who once before almost ruined his prospects in life. And the worst thing about the whole thing was, he was discharged on the strength of the current rumors about his connection with the swindling of Mannering & Company. I tried to induce him to go home and recruit a few weeks, but he said, in a determined way, 'You do not know me, Dick, if you think me capable of doing such a thing. I would die in the poor-house before I would ask favors of those who have ruined me.' And when I come to think of it, I believe he is right."

"He will never be obliged to ask any one for favors, but in his own right he must come back to an inheritance that belongs to him by right," Mr. Mannering said decidedly, as he brought his fist down on the desk by way of emphasis.

"I think I will go to him myself," remarked Aunt Pen, refolding the letter and returning it to its envelope.

"Best leave him to me," insisted Mr. Mannering. "Travelling does not fatigue me, and I'll bring him back to you in less than a week. You see, I feel that his trouble must all be traced back to me. It was I who injured him most deeply, for I ought to have had more confidence in a lad who had never deceived me. I have been punished for my unjust judgment, deservedly, I must admit. If I had listened to that boy's words about that scoundrel, Bateman, I would have been a richer man to-day."

"He did seem to understand the rascal better than other folks, but I suppose it was just guess work with him, too," assented Aunt Pen.

"Certainly, certainly! But somehow, like Chrissy about his guilt, he made a mighty good guess," chuckled Mr. Mannering. "I tell you that girl has got grit in her. My! didn't she read my title clear that day she came to see me about Donald's going away. She is an odd genius."

"She is as headstrong as a mule," retorted Aunt Pen. "If she has an opinion, she has it, and nobody can change it. I tell you I have had a wonderful amount of trouble with that girl."

"She is very set in her way I have noticed, but she is generally pretty nearly right, after all, Aunt Pen," replied Mr. Mannering, with a positive nod.

"About Donald I wish to say a few things before I go," said Aunt Pen, with an impatient movement, as if desirous of changing the subject. "Bring him home right away if he is able to come, and as it is he I don't mind your telling that I am sorry that I had any hand in sending him away. He is proud and may refuse to come back, but when he understands all he will see how we have been deceived."

Early in the afternoon of the following day Mr. Mannering presented himself at the residence of Dr. Kent and held a brief, but very touching, interview with Donald Bergh. Dick protested against the summary manner in which the old man proposed to carry off his guest, but as Donald made no serious objections to the journey he was obliged to bid him good-by, and go back to his counting desk. Twenty-four hours later Mr. Mannering finished his part of the contract by leaving his charge in the care of the old woman who had aided him in defrauding the orphan of his good name.

Aunt Pen never had been accused of being demon-

strative, but on this occasion she gave unmistakable signs of possessing a heart like other people, while Christine, who had been his staunch friend and defender during all the trying days of his exile, lost her usual composure and broke down entirely.

Nourishing food and good nursing soon brought back the color to the invalid's cheeks, and when Dick came home to help eat the Christmas turkey the young folks enjoyed the most cheering time that had ever been experienced in the quiet, staid, uncongenial home.

It was during this visit that the boys put their heads together and arranged to send Christine away to boarding school.

"She has been penny-dog here long enough, and if Aunt Pen won't bear her expenses I will do it myself," said Dick, with a determined look in his face.

"I will help you, Dick," said Donald. "Christine has been a faithful friend to me, and she shall lose nothing by her fidelity."

Much to their surprise Aunt Pen offered no objection to their plan. She admitted that the girl had been a trustworthy helper and had well-earned a little respite from toil and care. The necessary means for her support while at school she furnished without comment, and though her ideas of a school-girl's wardrobe were rather limited, Christine's outfit was quite respectable, after the donations received from her brother and Cousin. Her pride centred in the fleecy folds of a soft woollen fabric that Donald had ordered from the city, while over Dick's gay colored silk, with its flashy trimmings, she shed many a useless tear.

"The poor fellow has not the least bit of taste," she said, displaying the elegant dress to a friend. "The idea of a black gypsy like me wearing sky-blue. I will lay it away for Bessie Kent when she becomes Bessie—Somebody-else. She is as fair as a lily and will look bewitching in it. Of course, noble, good-hearted Dick must know nothing about my feelings, nor of the elegant attire packed securely in the bottom of my trunk. He gave it out of the kindness of his heart, dear, generous Dick, but I can never wear it—never."

Mr. Mannering offered Donald a lucrative place in his establishment, but, having his eye on the legal profession, he preferred going back to his old haunts, in order to finish the course he had begun under the direction of Judge Gibbons.

Miss Carrington's Seminary, the school selected for Christine, was a short distance out of Chicago, and Donald saw her comfortably settled before beginning his new life in the city.

Gerald Eadie was by no means well-pleased when he heard of Donald's complete vindication, but when Mr. Thayer confronted him with the particulars of the Academy episode, and reminded him of his protests concerning his former acquaintance with the young man, he became furious and threatened to withdraw from the firm if the subject was ever referred to again.

Mr. Thayer was not a man to submit quietly to the abuse which young Eadie heaped upon him, and before the altercation was over the breach between the two men had been so widened that an immediate dissolution of partnership followed.

Eadie went into business upon his own responsi-

bility, but he was not successful, and soon ran through the little fortune he had inherited from his Uncle.

When Dick went back to work after the holidays he was surprised to find Mabel Drayton, the precise young lady whose acquaintance he had made during that first memorable journey, an inmate of Dr. Kent's hospitable home. The intimacy begun on that dreadful night between the two girls so strangely met had ripened into a warm friendship that promised to be very agreeable to the Kent and Drayton families.

For months after the accident Mabel had been a great sufferer, and she had come out of the furnace of affliction a better, truer, more consecrated woman. Dick would scarcely have known her, the refining process having wrought such wondrous changes, both in her appearance and manner of life.



CHAPTER XXV.

CHRISTINE'S NEW EXPERIENCE.

CHRISTINE slipped gracefully into her new position, and it was not long until she felt quite at home among the stylish girls to which she had been introduced. The fact that she was in some way connected with Miss Carrington gained for her a certain amount of respect that she would not have received had she come simply as Christine Jewell, of Egbert. Her devotion to her books was praiseworthy, and her correct deportment and recitations made her a favorite with the teachers as well as the envy of the young ladies.

After the first few weeks her modest wardrobe did not trouble her. She always looked neat and tidy, and her dresses were well-fitting, although she had fashioned them herself. On the rare occasions that Miss Carrington indulged her pupils in select gatherings, or when there was a grand concert or fine lecture in the city, Donald's present came in good turn, and the girls declared that Christine Jewell, in her everlasting cashmere, looked as well as they did in their fine silks and costly laces.

One night when Judge Gibbons' daughters, with a few aristocratic friends, were to spend the evening at the Seminary, Miss Carrington suggested that she might wear the bright silk that still lay unfolded in

the bottom of her trunk, but Christine burst into tears, and assured her that she could not wear that dress.

"Very well, child! If it would pain you to wear it I will not insist," the lady answered, soothingly. "It was only on Donald's account that I mentioned it. You know he is a student in their father's office, and he might wish you to look remarkably well."

As Christine had not started at the opening of the term she occupied an apartment alone until after the middle of the session. When the girls came back after their week's vacation Miss Carrington kept her eye on the new arrivals, hoping to find a suitable room-mate for Christine. Out of a score or more of new faces her quick intuition selected that of Helen Kent, and a whole life-time's sweet friendship proved the wisdom of her choice. Though the girls had never met before, they were not strangers, having learned to love each other through the medium of the boys. Though not as close a student as Christine, Helen delighted in the fine arts, and her cultured tastes had a softening influence upon the young girl's matter-of-fact life; besides, her bright, cheery ways brought sunshine into the heart of the lonely girl, who had seen so little of the joyful side of life.

There was an inwardness to this glad child's sunny life, an inwardness from which all her outwardness emanated, and Christine was shrewd enough to guess that the secret spring of her contentment lay in her strong religious principles. The unseen love that pervaded and enriched her existence only opened her heart more effectually to the reception of human love and sympathy.

At first Christine pronounced her a perfect little

enthusiast, and though not believing in her peculiar way of expressing herself, she admired her consistency and longed to possess some of her devotional spirit. She seemed so perfectly happy—so different from all the other Christians with whom she had associated—so different even from Dick, who had been her ideal Christian of late. Miss Carrington's religion was of that shrinking type that lives more in deeds than words, while Dick, quietly bringing his Bible into every-day life, spoke only in the most reverent tones when naming the blessed name—Jesus. But this happy girl thought and spoke of God with all the loving fondness that she would bestow upon her father, and heaven was to her only a more beautiful home a little further on the way than the house that sheltered her dear earthly friends in the city.

As the days and weeks went by Christine became more and more interested in her studies. So intense was her desire to excel that she scarcely allowed herself time to write to Dick. Of course, an occasional note or card was indispensable, but the long, loving letters that she knew the dear brother craved were sacrificed to gratify her thirst for knowledge.

But one April evening, when the Seminary was all aglow in honor of some distinguished guests, Miss Carrington knocked at Christine's door and informed her that her Cousin Donald was in the parlor and wished to see her immediately. Something in the lady's pale face warned her of approaching trouble, but with outward calmness the young girl followed her teacher down the broad stairs and into the brilliantly lighted parlor, where Donald rose to receive her.

"Dick is very sick, Christine, and Aunt has dis-

patched for me to come home right away and bring you with me," he said, speaking rapidly, like one who had an unpleasant duty to perform and wished to dispose of it speedily. "Make all possible haste, for the train is due in thirty minutes."

But Christine needed no urging, for white and shivering she hurried to her room, and with the assistance of Helen and Miss Carrington she was ready in much less time than Donald had specified.

When settled on the train she turned to Donald with a request to see the telegram.

"Dick is sinking rapidly. Come home immediately and bring Christine," was what it said.

"Why did she not dispatch sooner," she said, referring to Aunt Pen. "It must be something sudden, for I had a letter from Dick the first of the week, and he did not speak of being unwell."

"He has not been strong for some time, and went home expressly to rest," returned Donald.

"I know he has not been as robust as usual this spring, but I thought he would be all right when he would get away from business a few days."

Donald spoke encouragingly about the sick brother, but Christine's conscience kept that unanswered letter plainly before her, and she could not rest. What were books or school to her in this supreme hour?

"We will reach home a little after midnight," Donald had said, as the train left the station, but a broken rail detained them half an hour, and when they reached the junction the train that was to have made connection with theirs had been gone just ten minutes. For the first time Christine's courage forsook her, and sitting down on the nearest bench she sobbed bitterly.

"We may just as well go to a hotel and make ourselves as comfortable as possible," Donald urged. "There will be no chance of getting off until day-break."

"Make ourselves comfortable and Dick dying!" Christine gasped.

"We can do nothing but wait patiently, hopefully, Christine. If it were in my power to hasten the speed of the train I would spare neither time nor money to accomplish my end, but don't you see how helpless that few minutes of unavoidable delay has made us?"

"Could you not hire a conveyance that would hurry us on a few hours earlier?" Christine inquired.

"The roads are in such a condition that even if I could persuade any one to venture out we could not reach Egbert until noon to-morrow. Rest easy, Christine, and by eight o'clock to-morrow morning you will be set down in sight of home," Donald urged, trying to speak cheerfully.

"But, Donald, I have been praying all night that we might reach home in time to see Dick living, and now to think that He has allowed us to miss the train by just ten minutes seems as though He did not want us to see him. Do you really think that He cares for us, or hears our prayers at all?"

"I think He does, Christine. Mother believed He listened to every cry of the heart," replied Donald, hesitatingly.

"Then why has He disappointed me so terribly?" she sobbed.

"Really, Christine, I cannot tell," he answered sadly, as he turned to gaze out upon the cold, starry night.

He was powerless to comfort this young girl in her sorrow, and more than ever before he felt the need of something that he did not possess. What could he say to Christine when his own soul was in such darkness? He had not noticed a motherly old woman in an old-fashioned bonnet and faded shawl who occupied a seat near his Cousin until she laid her hand on Christine's shoulder, and said in the sweetest of womanly voices:

"My dear child, I am sure that He both hears your prayers and cares for your sorrow, for I have tried Him many times and He never failed me yet."

"But my brother is dying, and I was so anxious to see him once more, and God permitted the train to leave without us—after my prayer, too."

"Poor dear! you do not understand that with the good God there are no accidents. He knows the end from the beginning, and this ten minutes delay was part of His plan, and all for some wise purpose. I, too, am on my way to see a dying friend—an only son—and he is in a hospital among strangers. I am dreadful anxious to see him, for I have not laid eyes upon him for five years. You see he belonged to the regular army, and his time has just expired; but before he could reach home he was seized with a fever, and yesterday I got a dispatch to come if I wished to see him living. When our train was delayed last night I prayed that we might still be in time to catch the Central Express at the junction, and then I begged the conductor to do his very best to make up for lost time, and he promised me that he would, but all to no purpose, for God ordered differently, and I know it must be all for the best. My son and your brother may be with

God before we reach the end of our journey, but if it is the will of the Lord, 'Let Him do what seemeth Him good.'"

Christine was crying softly now, and the poor, old woman nestled down close beside her. Donald could not hear a word she was saying, but he knew that she understood the power of that love which passeth understanding, and he was willing to leave her to settle Christine's torturing questions.

Under her soothing words Christine became quiet and composed, and when Donald again spoke of going to a hotel she offered no objections, but united her voice with his in persuading the old lady to accompany them.

Christine was persuaded to lie down for an hour or two, but her heart was too heavy to allow her to sleep, and at breakfast neither Donald nor the good old mother could prevail on her to swallow a mouthful of food.



CHAPTER XXVI.

SHADOWS AND SUNSHINE.

WHEN they reached the station in the morning, they found Abram waiting with the carriage.

"How is Dick?" asked Donald, as the old man came forward and relieved them of their baggage.

"We think he's a leetle better this mornin'. Leastways he's quieter, and more at himself."

"How long has he been sick?" inquired Christine.

"Nigh onto a week. Fact is, he come home a fortnight ago all tuckered out. He's been a workin' too hard, and now he's got to pay for it. 'Taint right, it's against natur' for folks to take on more than theie able to get through with without injurin' their health. And that's jist what the young master's been a-doin'." Abram rambled on, while Donald arranged the robes around Christine.

"Does the doctor think he will get well?" asked Christine anxiously.

"Well, now, I don't think he knows, Miss Chrissy. He comes up there three or four times a day; feels his pulse, shakes his head and looks wise. After that he sits down by the table and writes a heap of big words on a bit of paper, which he tells me to carry to the drug store and bring back the answer, which consists of a lot more medicine. He thinks he knows

a mighty sight, but my opinion is, he don't know nothin' about how it is a goin' to end."

Abram's loquacity was brought to a sudden end by the carriage stopping in front of the stately looking residence that had been the only home of which Christine had any recollection. Though very much reduced, Dick was conscious and seemed very glad to see them, but the doctor had forbidden them to talk to him; hence, their stay in the room was very brief.

For a fortnight afterwards Dick lay hovering between life and death, and then a change took place, the crisis was passed in safety, and he came back to health and strength.

That night when Christine lay so wide awake in the hotel at the little station where they had been delayed, she promised the dear Lord that if he would keep her brother alive until she could reach him in the morning, that all her life should be devoted to his service.

When she looked into the pale face of the suffering brother a few hours later, her heart went out in thanksgiving to the Great Being who had so graciously granted her request. Christine never did any thing by halves, and though it was hard for her to accept a religion that she had so often ridiculed, she determined to begin her new life at once, and more than that, she purposed that this new life should be a consistent one, and that her living should not be a stumbling block to others.

Realizing her own helplessness, she went directly to the right source for strength—nor did she go in vain. Difficult as it was for her to keep back the quick, impatient words that persisted in almost choking her, she was enabled to gain the victory that she so much desired. Dick's cheerfulness and patient endurance

of pain had much to do with encouraging her to persevere in spite of the fiery trials that at times almost overwhelmed her. Except the outward change that was very marked, no one knew any thing of the inward struggle that was going on in the young girl's heart, until by the power of the Spirit the battle had been fought and won, and she—Christine Jewell—had entered into her inheritance of that peace that passeth understanding.

During these trying days, while Dick seemed to be slipping away from earth, a change, almost as great as that which had come to Christine, had taken place in Aunt Penelope. She was tender, almost motherly in her ministries around the sick bed, and in her dealings with Christine and Donald she showed only kindness and consideration. One evening, after Dick was able to be around again, Donald came into Aunt Pen's room to spend an hour with her, the last hour that he had at his disposal, for early in the morning he expected to go back to the city to resume his study. After they had been conversing freely for some time, a deep silence succeeded. They both seemed to be busy with their own thoughts, but at last the stillness was broken by Aunt Pen asking abruptly:

"Donald, do you think that my life has been wholly wasted? Answer me truly now. I do not want the bitter truth to be sugar-coated in the least."

For a moment the young man hesitated, and then, looking her squarely in the eyes, he said:

"I do not, Aunt, you have kept a shelter for the orphans of your kinsfolk, when all their other friends closed their doors against them."

"Thank you, I know you are sincere, and I am glad there is a spark of gratitude left in your heart for me.

But it is just as you said, I have kept a shelter—a shelter only, for it is not, and never has been a home. I have not brightened your lives as I might have done, and I am afraid that my hard, uncharitable religion has had much to do with driving you all away from your father's God. I did not mean to be unjust or unkind, but my selfish, unchristian living has not tended to recommend to you the profession I should have adorned. The wonderful change that has taken place in Dick and Christine, has led me to examine into the short-comings of my own life, and I am free to confess that I have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. I have asked my Master to forgive me—for it should have been by my efforts that my children were gathered into the fold of Christ, by my living, instead of the influence of strangers, but it was not, and for weeks I have been praying that the sin would not be laid to my charge. I know that the All Merciful One has heard my petitions and that I am forgiven; and now, before you go away, let me hear you say that you forgive me too. Do not tell me that I have not spoiled your life, for I know I have. Tell me only that you forgive me."

"Indeed I do, Aunt, and more, I wish to assure you that I have myself to blame for the views I entertain of the Christian religion. I have allowed myself to frame my opinion more from the failings than the victories of God's professing people."

"I pray God that you may yet be brought within his fold, and that in heaven you may meet the dear mother, who will require you at my hands. I have often wondered that she did not warn you against coming to me for even a shelter, for she knew that your father owed his love of wine to my unwise train-

ing. I ruined his life, and came near sacrificing Dick to my false ideas of hospitality, and it was surely the influence of your good mother that prevented you from falling into the same fatal snare. I am thankful that you had strength to resist the temptations that I placed in your way, for you were born to the inheritance of a drunkard's child. Before you go away, I wish again to beg your forgiveness, and to tell you that you have always been a comfort to me, and that I am proud of the record you are making for yourself. You are an honor to the Bergh family. You can go now, I know you have some things to look after, and it is my bed-time."

"Good-night, Aunt," Donald said affectionately, as he took her hand. "You have done more for me by your confession to-night than you can realize. By your bravery, you have made me strong to do, and to bear. God bless you," and then he did what he had never done before, he stooped and touched his lips to her forehead.

This act of filial love brought the tears to the old woman's eyes, and she pressed his hand warmly in token of the appreciation she felt.

That was the last time he ever had an opportunity of expressing his affection, for in the morning when Christine went to wake her for breakfast she was dead.

Calmly and peacefully, while sleeping, she had passed into the presence of that Master whose forgiveness she had been imploring during the last few weeks of her life. He had been graciously preparing her for what he had been preparing for her, and at last, her stormy, unhappy life had rest and peace in death.

What she had denied the children of her adoption in her life, she bestowed upon them by her death, for except a few legacies to dependents and kinsfolks, her whole estate was bequeathed to the three young people, whose lives she had robbed of much of the brightness belonging to youth.

Donald never forgot that last hour in her company, and it was to that conversation more than any thing else in the world that he owed his final decision to surrender every thing he was, and every thing he possessed, to Jesus. All these years he had been making this woman's life an excuse for not accepting his mother's religion, but after her confession, knowing how much strength it required for a pride like hers to be humbled in the dust, he felt that every obstacle had been taken out of his way, and in the sheltering love of Jesus he found just the rest and peace he longed to possess. With this new love, came a desire to labor for the Master, and with a portion of the means bequeathed him, he determined to finish his education, and instead of entering the profession of his choice, devote his life to telling over and over again the old, sweet story of Jesus and his love.

* * * * *

The snows of five winters and the flowers of as many summers have covered Aunt Pen's grave since that spring morning when she was found cold and still upon her bed, but the good seed that she dropped just as she was going out of life has brought forth fruit in great abundance. That young scoffer who listened to her brave confession is now the pastor of a flourishing church, and by the blessing of God he has been the means of leading many to the dear Saviour

he so much loves. A year or more ago, Christine gave back that dainty dress of silk and lace into the keeping of Dick's fair bride, Bessie Kent—now Bessie Jewell, and a few weeks later Dick had the pleasure of welcoming Phil Garde to the place by his sister's side that only one could fill.

This is not a love story, or I might tell you Mabel Drayton has entered into a contract to brighten the home of Dr. Louis Kent, and that when the June roses come again, there will be a quiet wedding in the little church, and Helen Kent will wear the orange blossoms, while Donald Bergh will place the marriage ring upon her finger. After all it is love that rules the world, and woman's true sphere does not lie outside of the art of home-making. "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."



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